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MEN, WOMEN, AND LOVERS

BY

EDITH SIMCOX

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AND

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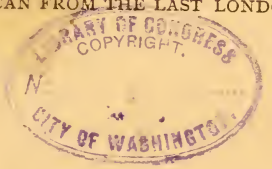
BY

EDITH SIMCOX

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION



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Johnny promptly began a caricature of me in the act of dedication. Those were happy days; and now that they are gone forever, the memory of this conversation emboldens me to preface the "fables and allegories" of the master's friends by a word or two of humble prose in memory of himself.

We — I mean his guests — used sometimes to agree among ourselves that, charming as his cleverness, readiness and kindness must have made him anywhere, he could nowhere have been seen to such advantage as in his own island; and I used to think that it was one chief proof of his wisdom to have chosen from the first a life so unlike other people's and so well suited to himself, because there was nothing about it that did not admit of being done perfectly — at all events, while he was there to do it.

I believe he was nearly five-and-thirty when he came to the island. I know nothing about his life before that date; and though old friends who did, used to come and stay with him, neither he nor they ever spoke, except incidentally, of those earlier days. The island is in British waters, but some hours' sail from the neighboring continent of Great Britain. The freehold or lordship, that goes by an archaic name (which I have forgotten), was in the market, and he bought it for a few thousand pounds. For years there had been no wealthy resident owner. The natives were farming fisher-

men or fishing farmers, with some surliness of mind and manners which we took to be a relic from old smuggling days, when a revenue cutter was the only strange craft ever seen among the sunk rocks and dangerous races which force even the islanders to keep a watchful eye on winds and tides.

The estate was to be had cheap, all the more so because the last lord of the isle had met an ugly fate. He was engaged to be married, and had come to the island with a friend for a fortnight's shooting, while his betrothed was absorbed in the last anxious business of the trousseau. The island women say she was to have had a ball-dress trimmed with sea-birds' feathers that he had shot for her. Just when he was to have started home, a spell of furiously bad weather set in, and from day to day the boatmen refused to put to sea, saying no boat could live. The young man was in despair. He had written to announce his coming, and no letter or message could pass to explain his delay.

At last one morning the wind sank for a little, and against the advice of the old men three sailors were bribed to get out their boat and try to take the two Englishmen to the mainland. The boat got out to sea, but in an hour's time the gale redoubled, the wind was right astern; the boat was seen scudding along under a single jib, and in the open sea all might have gone well even yet; but between the island and the coast there is half a mile of broken

water, part sand-bank, part sunken reef, with a few jagged rocks showing through the spray two or three rough lumps like dwarf martello towers, and one bare island white with sea-gulls.

Except at high tide in smooth weather there are only two passages along the whole half-mile, and with the wind that blew, it would have been madness to try to coast round outside the dangerous reach. The only chance — those who watched the end all agreed that the lost boat was handled as well as boat could be in such a storm — the only chance was for the boat to run straight before the wind and shoot the middle channel in its course. Ten minutes later and this too might have been done: at flood tide a current runs through this channel with a strength of seven miles an hour. The sailors had calculated to a moment the time for reaching the passage when the current was slackest for the ebb, but the fury of the gale had put out their reckoning; under bare poles they had been swept along faster than good sailing speed, and they were at the edge of the surf ten minutes too soon.

An old, old man, father of one of the sailors who was lost, has told me the rest of the story as if he had been on board himself. Ten minutes sooner or later a man who knows his boat can face even this current if the weather is but ordinarily rough, but now there was a raging gale, and the wind was blowing against the tide. The old father said this

as if it ended the story. A fiercer gust than ever bore the boat into the channel, bore back for a moment the force of the current, then there was a lull of wind, a rush of water, two men clung with all their force to the rudder, but the boat's head had swerved. As if the fiends of air and ocean had joined hands, the wind caught the wavering sail and drove the stout boat forward sideways, while the sullen current surging on the beam thrust her backwards, helpless, athwart the channel. There was but a moment for those who understood what was happening to look their death in the face. Tossed by the wind, she shipped a heavy sea; the waterlogged hull was swept backwards, almost on her beam ends, by the current, to the mouth of the channel, and then by one fierce wave lifted up and dashed upon the rocks.

For three years house and land stood ownerless and empty. It was like my friend that as soon as he heard this story he paid to the family of each of the three sailors drowned the full sum for which they had been tempted to put to sea. This is nearly thirty years ago, but traditions keep fresh in the island, and perhaps the memory of this wreck is all the greener because there has been no life lost at sea near the island since. One boat was wrecked in a fog upon a rock just outside the little harbor, but as the boat shivered, the two sailors on board heard the rattle of the chains that were fixed in the rock

three winters before in view of just such a contingency, and clambered into safety by their help. At daybreak they were fetched ashore in the little lifeboat, which, like the clanking clains, had been laughed at often enough by the sages of the beach as a landsman's whim, and from that day onward no whim of the master, as they had learnt to call him, was ever laughed at, however little it might be understood. The cottagers' faith grew into a convenient superstition, and because he often knew what would, and almost always what might happen, they came to him as an oracle, and followed his counsel without question, when, perhaps, if they had known his reasons, they would have ventured to prefer their own prejudices.

It was in this way, rather as a trusted authority than as a teacher of new-fangled sciences, that he got new methods of cultivation adopted by the people, and was able to watch the productiveness of the island slowly doubling before his eyes. Old customs of joint harvesting and winter gatherings for work and gossip, which were on the point of dying out, were revived under his influence with a difference which made them look like a forecast of the most enlightened modern notions about co-operative labor and sociability. He spent little money in the island; that, he knew, was apt to go to fill the spirit keg in the boat's locker; but he had inexhaustible devices for bringing about a friendly exchange of

properties which left the other party richer, and yet well pleased at having obliged the master.

It was he who launched the widows and grandmothers — for the sea had left a considerable "surplus female population" — in a homely domestic woollen trade of spinning and knitting: the knitting did so well that it was scarcely worth while to weave. Before his day the lone women would starve and struggle upon the tiny patch of ground they were too poor and weak to till to profit. The neighbors were kind enough, and if the poor soul broke down, would dig and plant for her without reward; but the fruit was little at best till the winter's knitting came to help. Then it seemed to arrange itself that each of these women should knit first for one of the largest farmers' families, and that in return her little plot should share with their own land at plough-time and harvest, and when the boats brought in their load of sea-weed for manure. We used to notice with pleasure that if there was any little bit of agricultural coquetry the men didn't half believe in for themselves, but thought the master liked, they always gave the widows' fields the benefit of it; and what with this and the women's own work, weeding and hoeing through the summer, the prime crop of the season always came off one of these lots that used to be so forlorn.

One of the first things that struck me in exploring the island was, that wherever one wanted to go, a

pretty natural path seemed to lead just there and nowhere else. There was only one real road, across the shoulder of the island, past the church and the mill and the castle, from the sheltered harbor with its stone breakwater, to the open beach where boats could anchor in summer. From this main road a dry shady lane or open grass alley led to each single homestead or cottage, and paths led on again from each dwelling to the owner's plot of field or common; but the divisions always led down to the cliff edge, so that in old times there was no such thing as a cliff path leading round the island. Here and there a plainly marked path tempted the explorer, and would lead more or less precipitously straight down to the water's edge, where stone was quarried for ballast or sea-weed landed for manure; but the idle stroller, wishing to pass from one such ascent to the next, had to retrace his steps to the high land, or vault over half a dozen primitive boundary walls, compact with granite, gorse, ditch and thorn. The first winter after his arrival, the master set himself to buy privately, one by one, for some little favor or help in kind, the consent of each small proprietor to open a footway for the castle guests; no path was made, but just where the hedge or natural obstacle had been, a rough stile or slab of stone opened or bridged the way; and as the cottagers learnt to cross each other's plots and found the new

paths handy, a new kind of neighborliness grew up among them.

When I knew him, the master's habits were as fixed as the seasons. In May he came to London for a month or so, and then was sometimes to be persuaded to pay a short visit to one or two old friends; but before July he was in the island again, and through July, August and September, the castle was filled and refilled with contented guests. His invitations were to a dozen people for a month, and at first I think some tried to come and go as they pleased, but in time we got to look upon it as a kind of treason to the host and the company not to leave and arrive in the fashion planned for us. Indeed, some of us liked the island so well we should scarcely have been prompt to leave it at a month's end but for the thought of another group waiting to enter on the reversion of our pleasures.

By October the last set of visitors had come and gone, and the master was alone with his people and his books. His intercourse with the latter resulted in the production, at longish intervals, of monographs that were the delight of the societies whose transactions they enriched. Few men have written so many of these short and hidden classics. He used to say that every subject he cared about was too large or too small to have a good book written about it; and we felt that it would be out of character for him to write anything but *the* book on any

subject. As it was, all that he wrote was perfect in form as well as notable in substance. He had the art of summing up in a few sentences all the preliminary knowledge required for understanding his argument, and then facts from all quarters were marshalled in what seemed a self-evident order to the support of a neat and novel proposition, so apparently self-evident that one wondered why it had never been clearly enunciated before.

For six months he lived his own life thus and was much alone. Sometimes in the spring he was lost sight of for a while, and sometimes encountered in queer corners of the world, sometimes bent on what were thought quixotic schemes of benevolence, sometimes on what were unwisely wild and rash adventures. As he grew older the latter kind of escapades became less frequent, and he was less averse to owning the past follies he had committed. He said every one must let off their steam somehow; for some people it is done involuntarily, — intense pain or pleasure swallow up all the surplus energies; others again have no surplus, but the rest must either risk explosion or let off an unearthly shriek at times.

Naturally many wondered why such a man had never married, and were slow to believe he never would. Only once in my hearing was he induced to give any approach to a serious answer to urgency on this point, and then it was by a quotation from

Chamfort: "Quand je songe que, pour me marier, il faudrait que j'aimasse, il me parait, non pas impossible, mais difficile que je me marie; mais quand je songe qu'il faudrait que j'aimasse et que je fusse aimé, alors je crois qu'il est impossible que je me marie." One lady had the courage to protest she thought he need have no modest fear, and then affected to run over her friends in thought, and concluded that she could produce seven who, in a month's time, would love him, if he would let them, quite well enough; whereto he said that people had different ideas about what was "enough."

His quotation from Chamfort sent me to that author, where I found another sentence: "J'ai renoncé à l'amitié de deux hommes; l'un parcequ'il ne m'a jamais parlé de lui; l'autre parcequ'il ne m'a jamais parlé de moi." The master, it must be confessed, spoke little of himself, and always, as it seemed to me, with a slight effort or reluctance, but still he did not entirely withhold that due of friendship, and hence no one suspected any mixture of motive in the visible readiness with which he turned to the other indispensable subject of his friend's *moi*. But he was entirely free from the vexatious arrogance which is just as fatal to friendship as either of Chamfort's omissions — the air of being interested in his friends' affairs for their sake and not for his own. However freely one acknowledged and felt his superiority, still it always seemed

as if he really wanted and would have felt the absence of that little something that each one had to contribute to his *entourage;* and as marriage might have interfered with his enjoyment of, or at least his dependence upon, these miscellaneous contributions, I for one was well content to let all stay as it was.

Sometimes even in the summer months, and oftener as autumn came near, we had continuous days of rough weather with gales of wind and rain that made cliffing a mad risk and any outdoor sport impossible. It was then that the master shone most brilliantly as a host; some provision was made for every one's amusement, and no one watched the sky dismally longing for a change of weather. But one entertainment had a certain veil of mystery about it. A select few, invited none of the rest quite knew upon what principle, used to disappear together for one long morning with the master himself into the most private room of the whole castle, a sort of boudoir leading out of his study on the farther side, and after this morning it was observed that first one and then another member of the mysterious circle was wont to disappear for hours, and no jesting inquiries could ever prevail with the initiated to reveal the secret of these absences.

At last the hour of initiation dawned for me. It was seven years after I had seen him first, and then I understood that it was only friends of seven years'

standing who were privileged to join the secret conclave. I believe the whim dated from one stormy October, not long after he had taken possession of the island; other visitors had gone, and there were only four or five old friends left together. He proposed, half to pass the days, and half, he told me, wishing for a *souvenir* of old times, that they should each write in a big blank book of his some episode of real experience — the description of a scene, a moment, a feeling, a reflection, something that should be the more entirely their own because of the remoteness of such veiled confessions from the intercourse of ordinary life. Gradually it grew into a custom that old friends each year might read, and if they pleased, add to the growing collection of these fragmentary scenes. The writers of some have already gone over to the majority, and with the tacit permission of their "true author and begetter," our lost, best friend, these are now printed

In Memoriam.

I.

Consolations.

Joys like winged dreams fly fast:
Why should sadness longer last?

—FLETCHER.

I.

I HAVE heard of a man who took to drinking because when he recovered from diphtheria he found his wife and two children had died of it. He was hardly to blame. An intense depression attends the first days of convalescence from this illness, and if there is at the same time any real cause of mental anxiety or distress, a state of mind is produced hardly distinguishable from melancholy madness, except by its cause and duration. I had been disabled, at an unfortunate time, by a bad attack of diphtheria, and the inevitable feeling of depression was aggravated by the fact that the scientific expedition to which I was attached had sailed without me, a friendly rival filling my vacant place, and a family upon whom I had been particularly anxious to call before starting on the expedition had left London during my illness, probably without hearing of it, so that they were free to imagine I had started for a two years' absence without even the bare formality of leave-taking. They were travelling abroad, I knew not where, and, besides, I had no colorable excuse for writing to explain a neglect they had not perhaps observed.

Physical weakness and mental despondency reacted on each other, and a more melancholy convalescent seldom accepted the island hospitality. The day after arrival was cold and cloudy, I was exhausted with a long journey, and, glancing carelessly at the ungenial sky, I thought the prescription of "change of scene" a shallow device of the doctors for sending their patients to suffer out of sight and earshot. The morning after was gray, too, but neither cold nor wet, and towards eleven o'clock, with the sense of discharging a laborious duty, I started for my first short walk. I remember walking along a solitary lane, and noticing the ruts and grass along the footpath, and feeling dimly injured, as if it wasn't worth a long voyage to see only that. But, in fact, the eyes of my mind and body were closed from simple feebleness: I had no vivid consciousness of despair, only a passive sense of being "used up" too completely for either remedy or revolt.

I did not see that the clouds were breaking, and that a clear space of blue sky was showing on the horizon. I was tired with my few minutes' walk, and thought I would just struggle to the shore for a moment before struggling back to idle sulkiness upon the couch in-doors. A tolerably easy zigzag path led down to the beach. I noticed a spider's web on the bramble that caught my ulster, and once, when my foot slipped, in catching the rock to steady

myself, I nearly put my hand upon an ugly slimy slug. I carried an extra scarf for prudence, and even that grasshopper was a burden to my feeble limbs. I had fallen an unresisting victim to the peculiar peevishness which succeeds acute disease, and if any organism higher than the slug had come in my way it would have found me villanously cross.

On reaching the bottom my temper was not improved by the first few steps over the raised beach of large rounded pebbles upon which, even in health, one may stagger a little uncomfortably; as in the lane, I had been looking straight before me, with unobservant eye and consciousness turned inwards, but it was a relief to reach a footing of fine firm shingle and sand, and with this encouragement I looked up. I was startled; it seemed as if I had been asleep and woke with a start.

I don't know what else was in sight, but this is what I saw. The inner arch of a sea-green wave was coming towards me, and the sun shone through the green. It was such a shock as if an angel had touched blind eyes and scales fell off, making revelation of light and color — light and color the like of which I had never felt the sight of before. There was a crest of sunlit foam upon the coming wave, but it was the soft, luminous emerald of the approaching arch that thrilled me with something like the sweet wonder of first love, and I did not want to see anything but that. The wave broke, and I

stood still with childish impatience to see if the next wave would repeat the delightful line and hue. A moment of anxious suspense, and then a longer, straight level line of wave lifted its head behind the surf, tossed its snowy curls, and swept majestically on one side the scrappy relics of its predecessor's end; then, as it came nearer, all along the line there was this wondrous curve of colored sunlight, softer than a clear emerald, fuller than the green of a sunset sky, more lasting than the opal's flash; its beauty possessed me. I forgot everything but the present moment and the wave. Just where I was, in the middle of the beach, I sat down. Life had come back to me already, for all my soul was eager expectancy and hope. What would become of me if I never saw this magic arch of light again? I could wait for its return a minute, half a minute — surely it would come! My pulse beat again with the hopes and fears of life.

Time measured itself by waves, not moments. The tide does not go on rising evenly; after a succession of fine, perfectly formed, proudly crested waves, the sea takes breath, and tiny rollers follow upon each other's heels, not one of which has might to wave away into its own volume the foaming *débris* of the last. Sometimes a big wave had its inrush spoilt by the back draught of a still mightier forerunner, and then all was seething foam, and I lost sight of my sea-green arch. Was it in such

caves that the sea fairies play, and was it only now and then by favoring chance that mortal eyes could catch glimpses of the hidden archway through? Somehow, as the spot one gazes on grows large, when one sees nothing outside this spot, one's mind perhaps guesses that it must be as large as all the many things we are wont to see at once together. So this green arch seemed to swell mountainously, and I could have believed the call if some mermaiden's hand had beckoned me near, as to the outer porch of the ocean palaces. But there was compensation, even when the foam veiled the opening gates of this unknown world; for the big waves that were all foam played with the wind, and the sun played with the waves' plaything, and the spray rose in showers that glittered like dewdrops, and once a tiny foam-bow laughed at me, mocking me slyly — Will you not watch and wait for me? But I was too wise; like a child who has found the right playfellow and a game to its mind, I was happy with the sea, and whoever had wished to read my thoughts must have watched a happy child with no room in its thoughts but for the grave prayer to a big playfellow, "Do it again, please." Again and again the waves rose and fell; slowly and cautiously, like an army with scouts, the waves drew nearer, feeling their way, and again and again the wonderful arch of green came like music on my troubled

mind — if indeed I had a mind, and not rather within the throbbing temples —

> That ocean where each kind
> Does straight its own resemblance find; —
> Yet it creates transcending these
> Far other worlds and other seas,
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade.

Time and trouble were no more, and when at last the waves were already washing the shingle at my very feet, and I rose reluctantly to leave the enchanted spot, I found to my amaze that hours had passed.

Crawling home was another affair, but as I sank on to the sofa to rest out the day, instead of the morning's sulkiness, it was with a half-smile I thought to myself, perhaps I am going to get well after all! and I went to sleep at night with less than a resolution, a dumb perception that, of course, as soon as the sun was out to-morrow I would go back to the shore and look for my wave again. I have seen the sea break often since, and I watch with the double pleasure of association for the tender lights that shine too rarely through the transparent curving waters, but I have never seen again one wave quite like that first, and I have never felt again at the sight quite the same thrill of startled pleasure as on this morning when the glory of the

waters called me back to hope and new sympathy with the world's *Te Deum*.

The next day I had no thought but to renew the once tasted delight, but I slept well, and was ready to start a little earlier in the day. The sun was fully out, but an hour sooner in the day makes half a tide's difference to the beach, and I felt like one whose lover has broken tryst when on reaching the halting-place of yesterday the sea appeared a long stone's throw off, and there were no breaking waves. Still one must take one's friends as one finds them, and I could forgive something to my playfellow; besides, the sands were smooth and dry, the sky was of the softest deep blue, cloudless, but without the cold intensity that follows rain, rather as if the thinnest veil of rosy mist hung over the dazzling vault; the cliffs which I saw almost for the first time began with a grand precipice, and then a broken craggy promontory ran out to sea, and one steep wall of it was covered with a cloak of ivy. I looked round and took courage to seek my fortune at the water's edge. It was near low water, and shallow waves were breaking in foamless ripples upon a level shingly beach; a few loose rocks lay together with wet sea-weed clinging to a kind of water-mark half way up their sides; the sun had dried the upper surface, instinct was driving me to follow the land as far to sea as I could, and by making a causeway of these rocks, I came to a point that let me

look down upon the clear shallow sea, and hear behind me the swish of the ripple as it sank back over the shingle.

Then I looked for my friend of yesterday. It wasn't quite canny. Had the mermaidens been at work, and was my world changed as I slept? There were no green breakers here, and yet I could not turn away in blank disenchantment, for another spell was cast on me; here was magic and mystery and an enchantment more ineffably subtle than the last. It is the nature of the sea's waves to break, and I have dreamt of "the light that never was on sea or land;" but what is this light on sea and land at once, shedding colors by the side of which the rainbow is uniform and sober? The surface of the sea was mottled like a mackerel sky, but the dancing ripples had a thousand changing hues, all painted as it were upon a background of shining transparent gold, or rather upon gold of a luminous sheen that lent transparency to the bright colors laid on it. I watched the dazzling surface of the water, trying patiently and in vain to see what colors made the brightness. In the delirium of illness I had been haunted with queer fancies about space of four dimensions; I wondered was this the land where space had four dimensions, and had the colors of the spectrum changed to match; for if so, it seemed that the fourth dimension was the color of sugar-candy, and every color of the rainbow in this uni-

verse was mixed with gold-brown light, turning the blue and the green of the old world into new and indescribable shades. The sea was very still and clear, and the sun glittered on the shallow pebbly bottom, as well as the glancing surface, and one sheet of illuminated color shone through the other, and I knew not which was which.

All I felt was the spell bidding me look and listen and drink in the sunshine. I stretched myself on the stones like a thankful mollusk, and as one spreads one's hands to the fire in winter, or a suppliant outstretches them to claim a boon, so my thin cold fingers spread themselves out to catch the showered warmth of the sun's radiance; and mixing with the soothing warmth was the still music of the alternate splash and rustle of the rippling tide, a faint splash as the tiny wavelets broke, then a trickling sound like that of the stream's current when the boat forges ahead as the oars are at rest, and then a rustle like that of wind or showers on the forest leaves as the retiring water bade the sand and shingles kiss, as it ran away from them like a child at play, crouching in mock concealment, ere it springs upon its playfellow with another sweet caress. I felt very near the world of strange sea-beasts; the sun touched some archaic fibres in my frame, and I seemed to understand how wise mollusks that lay still and looked at it, grew lovely with green and orange, lilac, rose and crimson. A mo-

ment more and I might have drunk in more wisdom than the sea spirits hold good to grant to mortal men, but the magic spells were a lullaby and I lost myself awhile, the bright sea vanished, and I only heard, as if far off in dreams, now and again the trickling wavelets and felt the gracious warmth pouring into my outstretched hands.

After a time some obtrusive vertebræ reminded me we had degenerated from the possibilities of molluscous ease. The tide had ebbed and turned, and it was still just possible to leave my rocks dry shod and regain the beach, but I was less simply happy than yesterday. Life was becoming strenuous. If every day was to be crowded like this with new emotions — my doctor had forbidden excitement — I wasn't at all sure that I was well enough to stand the strain. They talk about sending one to the sea to rest, but it is much easier to dissect a jellyfish than to retrace the course of evolution in one's own person and grow back into one again; and yet experience seemed to show that sane humanity could not bask in the seaside sunshine without feeling irresistibly tempted to cherish that impossible ambition. It would be a help towards understanding the philosophy of dreams if we more often watched the wandering course of sleepy thoughts that we suffer to choose their own way at the random guidance of association; I felt vaguely as if there was a mystery to solve, as if there must

be a reason, could I but remember or find out, why on this solitary coast all at once "es ward mir heimisch zu Muth," and even as I wondered what the problem was, my thoughts strayed sleepily into wild and incoherent strains, in which it seemed as if I was the passive inanimate portion of the natural world while the sea and sky moved and spoke and ruled around me. But I was tired now even of this idle kind of thought, and concluded reasonably to go home and to sleep over a stupid book.

I was not sorry the next day to be spared a fresh encounter with the strange spirits of the island. My host took me out in his boat; we talked to the sailors, of a son at sea, of the lobster fishery and the vraic harvest, and things seemed real and natural. I felt just a little afraid of fresh bewildering encounters, and I half planned for the next day to stroll upon a higher level and not to go and watch the sea break. So thought, so done. The shady lane, with its pretty hedgerows, in which the pink leaf-shoots of the young honeysuckle mixed with the flowering May, led past a group of dwarf massive cottages with farm fittings of a Cyclopæan order —the gate-post hung for a hinge in a perforated slab, and the pigsties had granite troughs—to a footpath opening on the downs. A pleasant light caught the cottage roof, where a patch of golden moss grew upon the thatch of the gable, and where a fluted row of tiles formed an eave beyond the thatch to

carry off the autumn rains. A wide-mouthed, clean-faced girl was nursing a baby in the doorway, and smiled benignantly as I passed. Walking was easier than three days before, and I had resolved not to think of anxious subjects till I was strong enough to decide on them with better effect.

A fresh wind blew from the sea; the path led at a varying level along the down broken every here and there with projecting crags, boulders fallen from a crag above, and sudden walls of rock, where the sea has carved a narrow inlet. It was a pleasant path, but I had seen such views before in Devon, Yorkshire, or maybe elsewhere; nothing was strange save the aromatic whiffs of some thymy perfume that seemed to come from

> The underflowers, which did enrich the ground,
> With sweeter scents than in Arabia found.

But somehow the path tempted me to a distance beyond my strength. I was tired of wide views that seemed just like what one had seen and known all one's life; they seemed to remind me tiresomely of what I was trying to forget, that life itself was like to be hard and tiresome when I got back to it anon. I wanted to escape from this remembrance, and in another moment I should have been caught regretting the weird spirits of the shore. A stronger gust of wind, that it was a labor to battle with, put the crowning touch to my discontent. Just in front the down sank a little, a steep, green, semicircular

arena faced the sea, and I struggled on to reach its shelter. Only a step or two beyond the ridge and the air was warm and still, like a June evening. I threw myself on the slope and felt the rapture of repose. I was under the lea of a flaming gorse bush, and the sweet shadowy fragrance stole upon the senses unawares; something ineffably sweet and subtle seemed to pervade the moveless air, the subtle sweetness was strange and new — were there spirits of the earth here as well as of the sea?

I forgot the weariness, and half raised myself to see whence this new wonder came. The clump that sheltered me was ablaze with the deepest orange-yellow bloom; each flowering spiky head was an abyss of warm, deep, odorous color; furze like this, indeed, I had never seen before, every blossom large and open wide, and countless full open blossoms, jostling each other upon every stem, and the flowering stems jostling each other on the burning bush. I drew a big branch towards me, and drank like nectar a great draught of the pure, sweet scent. But the sweet gorse is a treasure, not a mystery, and the first breath I drew on this spot was laden with a mystery of sweetness. I lay back upon the grass again with closed eyes, inviting the ethereal messenger, and my heart sank as for half a moment I waited in vain for the perplexing fragrance. I moved impatiently, and threw my arm back to make a pillow; at the very moment some-

thing like fairy fingers seemed to pull my hair, and in a breath the scent was there again, and the simple magic of its being read. Mingled with the gorse, half choked by the robuster clumps, but thrusting its tender green leaves triumphantly through the cushions of the younger plants, a very thicket of sweetbrier was growing all round, and the shoots I had crushed unknowingly were sending out their sweetest fragrance to mix with the simple nectar of the whin-bloom in a cunning draught of unearthly delicacy. Those may laugh at me who will, and count it strange to be thus moved by the breath of a passing scent, but my heart grew warm with love for those children of the warm, lone earth; they had shed their fragrance year by year, and until now none had loved them for it. They were generous to me, indeed, with the one-sided generosity of power; it was I, not they, that were the richer for my loving them, for thinking with a tender joy that Love himself had learnt his sweetness from the flower's kisses, wherewith the great nother fed his youth, and the refrain to the pretty fancy came to me like an omen: —

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet.

The sunlit waves came to me with a startling and happy message that the outer world was fair, whether I saw it or no; but the sweetbrier among the prickles challenged me to own a spiritual truth

— the world was lovable, whether I saw why or no, and whether its sweetness was beloved — as by me to-day — or left unseen, undreamt of, through the lonely years. My brain was tired and the thoughts wandered wildly ; snatches of old hymns mixed with the "Pervigilium Veneris," and my last thought was a dreamy wonder, whether the love of God was something like my love of earth just now. A wave of love sweeps over us just when we feel the one thing needed given, and the love that seeks its object will own none but the imagined giver, and to the imagined object of our love we give a name — our God, kind Earth, or Mother Nature — and such naming is in itself a prayer, a blessing and a thanksgiving for the good God's gift. Thoughts like these rose questioningly ; and pleased with asking, ere the question pressed for answer, I was asleep *con dio*.

Noon was past, and the south sun had travelled two hand-breadths towards the right before I woke, rested, hopeful, and refreshed. The sound that woke me was the tinkle of a sheep-bell, following an old crone, who was tethering the family cow to graze on the common just above. I called to her, and though our friendly speech was mutually unintelligible, like two children of nature we arranged friendly terms of barter, and she brought me a cup of creamy milk and a stale crust of home-baked bread. I rose invigorated, and before leaving my warm lair bent for one more draught of the mixed

sweet scent. Alas! the island *is* enchanted! the gorse was sweet, and so was the brier, with their several known and pleasant sweetness, but the unearthly fragrance of those two moments came back to me no more. It may be that, as slight sounds are distressing to a feeble brain that would pass unnoticed else, so a more than normal keenness of the other senses goes with moments of excited feebleness. Basking in the sunshine I had felt a dim intuition of ancient kinship with the many-colored zoophytes of the shallow seas. Here on the thymy heights what more natural than to remember some hints of fellowship with the insect hosts, whose very hum seems to catch some intermediate sense, and is more felt than heard? Still I was undismayed; whether the momentary sensation was to be renewed hereafter, or to remain forever alone in memory, I could doubt my life or love more easily than the certain fact that, once and again, I had been drunk with ineffable odors in this sunny island combe.

I was strong now for a new departure, but the wind was still high upon the downs, and my thoughts reverted to a wide path leading to the shore, the upper end of which lay not far back. I had wondered as I passed to what the path could lead, for there was neither beach nor anchorage below. The path was plain and easy, and landed me upon a slightly sloping surface of solid rock;

massive iron rings were fixed in it here and there, and rusty iron bars between them were twisted like wire into uncouth shapes by the fury of the waves. At one side the edge of the rocky slab sank sheer into the water, and there was a deep, narrow passage where a boat might run alongside to land its cargo; clearly it was here that the sailors used to land their boat-loads of sea-weed, to be carried up the path to spread upon the fields of the nearest farmstead as manure. The landing-place was one that could only be used in the fairest weather, and the station was deserted now; the coast was rough and broken, rocky pinnacles, tiny islets, and sharp sunken rocks in masses, large and small, strewed the coast, and the fresh wind was dashing great waves against them all with deafening roar.

And when the sea was breaking, I could do no other than draw near to watch it break. The old spell drew me on to the farthest accessible point of rocky projection; by clambering beyond the broad level slab, along a kind of promontory, covered at high water by the sea, but now dry save for a few pools in the spray-worn hollows, and bare of all maritime life because of the violence of the waves, one reached a secure low pinnacle, round which the waves were breaking in all their glory. The noise was deafening, the sea a clear sea-green, the sky and sunlight bright and clear. Chance fixed my eye at once upon a certain rock over which each

wave broke, burying the summit beneath a flood of foam; then as the wave retreated and the rock rose from its immersion, still waterfalls fell as if from some secret reservoir, from ledge to ledge of the rock, into the still seething, surging surf below, and ere one could discover whence these little cataracts proceeded, another wave submerged the whole bed of rocks, and again retired, leaving unaccountable waterworks to play for a moment and vanish again. It was a giddy sight, like watching the revolutions of a waterwheel, and that, too, in doubt as to what the designers of the machinery had meant to compass by its motions. A great wave broke, and a shower of spray rose up against the sky, where the fickle wind caught it and sent a cool handful lightly in my face. I was dazzled for a moment, and as I recovered sight my eyes were bent a yard or two farther out to sea, upon the right.

Here, when the wave had burst, the sea was level with thick, white smooth foam, but as the waters rushed back, sucked down as if by a great passion of remorse, then, instead of black rocks showing sharp teeth above the surf, the waves, as they sank back, disclosed a deepening, widening, whirling abyss, with walls of whirling foam, a funnel-shaped vortex, boring down as it revolved into deeper and deeper recesses of the sea, with foaming sides, seeming to recede from the intent gaze. The snowy whiteness of the whirling billows, the seeming soft-

ness of a sea all foam, have a strange fascination for the giddy senses; there are clouds on which one would choose to rest if they were in reach, and no cloud could promise a softer, cooler, sweeter resting-place than the very heart of this foaming whirlpool. Wave upon wave spent itself, and I could not cease from watching the returning, ever-varying face of the whirling hollow, down which creamy cataracts poured over the shifting watery walls. The sun shone upon the foam, it glittered like snow, and one might have said there was no purer whiteness in the world than this, when all at once there floated across the foam another brightness, of white, glancing, sunlit wings. I remembered as a child having wondered how in heaven we should know one angel from another if they all wore the same white robes, and had wings of just one shape. It would have strengthened my young faith much if they had shown and told me that one white radiance might differ from another as far as blue and crimson. And still to this day one hears the shallow saying, A thing is either right or wrong — it must be black or white; whereas the glory of one rightness may differ from the radiance of another as the silvery glitter of the gull's white wings differs from the dazzling whiteness of the sunlit foam. The seagulls were swooping through the air and skimming for a moment the surface of the waves, but one seemed to have made her nest upon the very rim of

the boiling caldron of Charybdis, and it was only on a closer look that I saw at moments just a speck of black rock showing momentarily through the surf. The sea-bird was perched upon the rock, and the waves washed round it, and the silver wings shone like moonbeams, like the moon resting on a cushion of snowy moonlit clouds. And again and again, as I looked from the swirling waters to the still flight of the circling gulls, the two spirits of brightness would meet for a joyous moment as the sea-bird nestled among the foam.

The cheerful voice of our host roused me at length from reveries in which it seemed possible that a world should be, with only differences between one and another right, between the new creations of wisely loving souls and the different glories of consistent truths. I followed him, silently thinking, too, that it made a change in the memory of sad and gloomy hours to think that through them all the gulls had hovered in still circles over the unchanging sea. But that evening, as I read a Frenchman's letters, I took to heart what he says to a friend of such walks as these of mine with the island spirits: "La mémoire de ces promenades est à la fois un plaisir et une douleur. *C'est pour moi une sensation qu'il faut renouveler sans cesse pour qu'elle ne devienne pas triste.*" This is partly true of all pleasures, and wholly true of the pleasures of love. I was in love with these sweet spirits, and love

grows sad without daily renewal of the one joy of meeting the beloved. I had felt this already, and, knowing life could not be spent in the incessant renewal of solitary delights, henceforward I sought the company of my fellows, and went cliffing, shooting, boating, swimming, with my host and the island fishers.

It was not till the last evening of my stay that I ventured upon a solitary farewell stroll. The impression had been gaining strength in my mind that my first thoughts of despair had been premature and exaggerated. If the Arctic expedition had started without me, that might be a loss, but the other misfortune was the less irreparable in consequence. I might see the —— s in less than two years; nay, I was beginning to think that it would be possible, without indiscretion, to let Mrs. —— know that it was not by choice I had failed in attentive, nay, assiduous, respect. I did not know their address, but they were going to be at Venice in June, and the English banker there was an old school friend of mine, to whom I could easily entrust a circumstantial message, with a hint that he should deliver it in the hearing of both ladies at once. I was thinking of these things, and not looking where I went, when suddenly I was brought up against one of the rough stone walls, crowned with a stubby hedge, which served to divide the farms of different proprietors on the island. I had been landed before in

a similar *impasse*. A path led into the field for its owner's use, but none led through, as the farmers did not trespass on each other's land. I had no such scruple, and scaled the wall, walking along the top of it to find a gap in the hedge, where I could drop down on the other side. At the convenient spot I sat down for a moment to rest in sight of a still blue patch of sea. The curving down framed it as in a hollow, and on the left, where the land rose above the horizon, in clear relief against the pale blue sky, stood out one solitary fir-tree. One saw the sky between the branches, and the upper outline against the sky was clear and dark. It was resting to look upon. My enjoyment of the island beauties had grown dangerously strenuous, because I could not break the trick of trying to find a meaning everywhere. This tree against the sky proved nothing, and all the more for that its mere contemplation was fraught with inexplicable pleasure.

I went on my way, breathing a blessing on the good householder who had tended the fir-tree in its youth; and though I don't know that my prayers had anything to do with the result, I was as much pleased as if they had, when I heard that the goodwife's son came back the next week from a three-years' voyage, with all his pay in his hand, enough to buy the ten shares in the market-boat which old neighbor Nicholas had left to provide a portion for his only daughter. But I did not know this

then, so my prayers were only for unspecified good luck.

After re-entering the castle lands, I wandered through the first pine wood, bending inland by degrees, and just as I neared the public way I turned back, leaning on a grassy bank. This time I was silenced; no thought of God or man, angel or faery magic, crossed my mind. The view was of pure, sober, lovely earth, and the eyes were glad to rest unthinkingly on its stillness. From the grass bank on which I leant the land sloped gradually to the seaward. There was not much difference in the level, but enough to show far round on either side a narrow strip of dark blue glittering sea; in front, and as far round as the eye readily saw at once, between me and the sea, there stood a low thin belt of firs; and as I had seen the sky through the branches of the one fir-tree by the farm, so now the blue sea showed through the wood between the tree stems, and the dark green foliage against the blue stood out in sharp relief, and the sky above the deep blue sea was blue, dim with a rising haze. There was nothing to be thought or said, and yet weariness was impossible; the vision was of embodied rest: the still universe seemed a temple of the Most High, and I fed my soul by looking.

It was the memory of this long look that came back to me first, forty-eight hours afterwards, when I leant out of a third-flour bedroom in Bloomsbury

to seize a glimpse of the sunset sky. On rare evenings, when the clouds have melted, there is a little patch of pearly-gray, between the houses, shading into beryl-like transparency, and the topmost twigs of an old elm-tree make a feathery fringe of green against the sky. Here, too, is stillness, beauty and unreasoning peace; and down below a neighbor has trained a jessamine against his bit of garden wall. I saw the feathery green of the new year's young rich shoots, and the white flowers that shine like stars upon a moonless night against their dark, cool bed. The light grew paler and paler, a short-lived flush of pink came and went, and then the pale gray deepened into night, still, calm and sweet, and the starry jessamine still glimmered through the shade. Night fell, and then I wrote to Venice.

That was five years ago. The dutiful little note of answer that Marian wrote to me in her mother's name had one word more of kind regard in it than strict civility required, and on the faith of that word I worked, and hoped, and waited; and as the years went on I never ceased to remember in dark hours that to every change of joy and sorrow in the mixed web of human life there is a far-away accompaniment of unchanging beauty, peace and calm delight, for the gulls swoop as ever through the sunlit air, and alight upon the breaking waves, and the starry jessamine shines at sunset through the London smoke.

. . . . . .

Marian asks why I never told her all this before.

Are you jealous, sweetheart, of my amours with the spirits of the waves and flowers? And besides, what was there to tell? It is a long story, and yet it comes to very little. I was ill and went to the seaside, and the waves broke, sweet wild-flowers grew, and the changing sky was overhead. I saw visions and dreamed dreams; but rash mortals fare ill who would woo the very gods. The island imps teased me, they hid when my heart was aching; but I think, darling, they meant it kindly, for after every trick they played me came back the memory of a sweet, fair face, with grave brown eyes that could not tease or trifle; and if I was ever faithless, this was my sin, and you must forgive it to the fairies of the shore; but for their mischievous bright magic I had despaired at once of life and love, and — Marian — you.

III.

A Diptych.

Thank luve that list you to his merci call.

—James I. of Scotland.

II.

AND who is this new artist with a speaking brush?" said Sir Alfred Osborne, as I was showing him after dinner the last additions to my modest gallery; "and what nut is he giving us to crack — is it a new version of the Choice of Hercules, or a modern riddle of Sacred and Profane Love?"

I said, with feigned unconcern, "The diptych? Oh! that was my wife's last birthday present. I hope you like it, for the fact is, I want to persuade you to do the artist's portrait for me." (Indeed I had asked him to dinner with that sole purpose in my machiavellian mind.) The courtly President of the Royal Academy bowed towards the lady of the house, and turned his assent into a prayer for his fellow-artist's gracious leave. When the portrait was exhibited, I heard one painter call to another, "Look at this woman with the everlasting eyes." People who want to flatter me call my wife a feminine Watts, and she has certainly never painted anything better than this diptych: two single figures of fair women in a plain black frame.

In the First Panel.

We had spent six weeks in the same country house, and were engaged to be married. I felt very much in love, thought Edith the sweetest girl in the world, and myself the happiest of men. You remember one of three successive summers — not this year or last — famous for continuous months of hot sunshine? The six weeks were cloudless, and to this day I recall them as a period of unclouded brightness. I had never even fancied myself in love before, and it seemed as if an undiscovered world was all at once revealed in the moment when my love quivered on the verge of passion at the first parting after, we thought, our hearts had met. I had to return to my work in London, and we were not to be together again until the autumn. We parted in the garden alone, and I felt that I was, indeed, the happiest of men when, after pressing her in my arms and kissing the fair girlish cheek, a faint flush rose to the temples, and, burying her face as if she would hide from me in my own arms, she turned the other cheek to my kiss.

After this the parting was a bearable distress. We wrote sweet letters like many another pair of lovers. Edith's were all that a girl's first letters to her love should be — tender, playful, shy, and hinting at a depth of feeling that did not yet dare to find a voice. I was content, without misgiving, and

carried about with me through each day's engagements an underlying sense of still delight, like the feeling with which sometimes one wakes from sleep, wondering what pleasant thing is waiting to be remembered. As if in sympathy with Edith's innocent faith in her lover's talents and desert, the chapter of accidents brought me just then first one happy chance and then another, and it seemed very pleasant to have some one that it was a duty to make happy by telling her pleasant things about one's self. I caught myself thinking that if married men did not confide in their wives, or if their wives did not sympathize with the confidences, the fault must be in the men. I kept back nothing, and Edith's sympathy was angelically ready, and quite as intelligent as could be expected, considering that the darling girl was just the desirable least bit on the further side of perfect wisdom in her estimate of the man she loved.

Then they came to London. Easter fell early the next year, and we were to be married just after, and enjoy our spring in the summery south. The first warning or hint of a misunderstanding left me almost stunned with simple amazement. This was how it befell. Church-going was not much in vogue at the country house where we had met first. The church was ugly, too far to be a tempting walk, too near to break the coachman's Sabbath. On two Sundays, I remembered now, I had ridden across

country to see my own people, and so had not had to give an account of my doings in regard to public worship. Then the first Sunday of my stay Edith had perhaps only thought of me as one young heathen among the rest, and the last two weeks we had made a compromise, not too painful to her conscience. She stayed at home with me in the morning, and in the evening I went to church with her and sang Ken's and Keble's evening hymns with some real devotional feeling. Who has not felt as if it would be good for him to have good angels always as near as heaven seems on a summer's evening as the church-bells ring for vespers; wild rose and honeysuckle trail from the shady hedgerows, the footpath through the meadow leads only to the village church, and what if each stile is blocked by a rustic pair of sweethearts, so long as the accomplished child of the gay world by our side is ready to answer our longer, more exacting wooing as satisfactorily as these buxom damsels do the laconic "Wiltha?" of their slouching swains?

Now in London, Sunday was my chief holiday, and I had not cared to waste it in sitting under eminent preachers. Perhaps it was stupid of me. I had no home or sisters to show me the ways of this feminine world, but it had simply never occurred to me that it could make any difference to Edith how much or little I believed of the things she went to church to say. Once or twice we had

had a little playful sparring as I thought; as I have a soul on earth to save, I thought it was no more; and I was at a loss to guess what troubled her when one Thursday Edith seemed shy and silent, and on the Saturday as I spoke of what we would do and talk about to-morrow, she blushed and looked embarrassed, and then said, "Would you mind not coming to-morrow; I want a long talk with you, but not to-morrow, please; after Sunday, which day next?" She seemed unhappy, but I thought it was only some girlish trifle, perhaps some woman friend she wanted to see and did not like to put before my visit; but since she was ill at ease, I would not even notice the little nothing that had come between us, and planned at once a drive, a visit we could pay together, and a walk which, though suburban, was solitary on week-days.

All this was agreed upon for Tuesday. Edith was herself again by then; we talked as usual through the drive, paid our duty visit to an aristocratic godmother, who received me graciously, and then, bidding the carriage meet us half a mile farther on, we were alone at last. The field before us was bleak, the wind blew freshly over the brow of the hill we skirted, and the birds were singing; we met two roughs with an air of Ratcliff Highway about them, and lines and cages in their hands that implied an uncomfortable threat against the songsters' peace. The hedges had a sun-dried look,

and the sheep's wool was ragged and smutty; but the new brick-field and its latest emanations were behind us, the lightly trodden footpath had a rural bogginess, we saw the sky, we were together and alone.

Maybe some foolishness passed between us, and then her eyes met mine with happy frankness. I said, All was well, was it not? I knew nothing was the matter last week, but just for a moment I had been frightened by the fancy — supposing anything should be? She said that was just it; she had been frightened — foolishly, she was sure, and now she did not like to tell me what it was; — should she tell me now? I was sure to say it was only foolishness, but she didn't mind that, since it wasn't really true.

"Since what was not really true?" I asked without the shadow of anxiety.

She blushed and hesitated, and said, Would I forgive her, she ought not to have believed what any one else said — she didn't believe it, but it had made her unhappy only to hear it said that I —

As I am a sinner, I expected some such unlikely slander as that I drove my horses with a bearing rein, or had been seen shooting at Hurlingham. The ghosts of my god-parents forgive me! It was with much the same sense of relief and irrelevancy that I heard at last the end of the stammering sentence. It was foolish of her to make so much of it; she

had thought since that Mr. So-and-so wasn't speaking seriously when he said it, but at first it had frightened her. "You know," she added shyly, "we have never yet spoken about those things, and so I couldn't feel as if I knew for myself all that you feel — I only know you are so good. I never ought to have doubted."

"But you haven't told me yet, sweetheart, of what the calumniator accused me?"

It was pretty to see the flash of illogical delight that shone through her tears as she cried, "I knew it! I was sure you would say it was a calumny. Forgive me, darling, it was my love that made it seem so horrible, and yet I ought — if I had only loved you as I ought — to have known that it could not be true."

I suppose it is some wretched survival of the brute that makes a man feel stupidly as if he were somehow a finer fellow himself when the woman he loves is the least bit of a (darling) goose. I felt a momentary temptation to test my power by accepting this blank cheque of acquittal, and promising to forgive my darling this once if she would never believe any harm of me again. I thought of this only as a passing jest, — of course she would tell me what it was all about at some future time, and we should laugh together over our first and last attempt at a "serious explanation."

Fortunately for both our lives, this slighting im-

pulse revolted me as a disloyalty to my heart's young queen; and as we pulled ourselves together with a joint consciousness of having behaved with a something less than our usual decorum, I took up the interrupted conversation in the most matter-of-fact tone I could command. "So-and-so is really a good friend of mine; what was it he shocked you by saying about me?"

And she replied, this time without hesitation, "He spoke as if you didn't believe in the Bible. Lady —— said something about your review of Brugsch's 'History of Egypt,' and Mr. So-and-so laughed, and said — I couldn't help hearing him, and it was that that made me so unhappy; I couldn't forget the very words, and yet I didn't like to tell you about it, because that looked as if I had more belief in him than in you. The words were, 'Why, you don't suppose Arthur takes all the A. V. for Gospel?'" She went on, talking rather fast, as if to give herself confidence, for I was silent and taken by surprise: "Of course it was foolish of me to take to heart what was said so lightly. I suppose it would be a heresy to take the books of the Law, even in the Authorized Version, for 'Gospel' in the true sense, but it hurt me to think that a friend of yours — and you say he is a real friend — should speak of you as if you were not one of us. I wondered" — here again her voice fell, and she blushed and hesitated, and then half whispered, leaning on my arm the

while, "I wondered whether I was wrong to let our marriage come so near without speaking of these things. You know I had hoped we should have the full service, but I was afraid to ask if you would mind" —

There is a degree of misunderstanding that remedies itself by dint of its very completeness. I did not know in the very least what Edith was talking about, but her words called up the thought of a doubt that had crossed my own mind about our marriage rites, and I answered the suggestion of my own thoughts rather than hers. I drew her a little closer, and spoke so gravely that the poor child's hopes beat high.

"Of course, darling," I said, "I had not expected you to go with me in quite everything I think: people may love and trust each other without that. Perhaps" — I was soon to be ashamed of this conceit — "perhaps I can more easily enter into your ideas than translate mine into the language you would think orthodox, and that is why I thought it best not to raise any discussion about our marriage. So long as the form is legal, that is all that signifies; and I felt that it would be selfish of me to insist on my own preferences in a matter that would make so much unpleasantness for you. And besides, I thought you yourself, dear, might have some feeling against a civil marriage."

She looked at me with startled, uncomprehending

eyes. I had given up the idea of proposing that we should be married by the Registrar, because of the scandal it would cause in the family, and because I thought it pedantic to make the services of that estimable official an integral part of the Rationalist creed. I did not guess that Edith had never heard of a civil marriage, except as something vaguely wicked, done in tracts by infidel working men, who are subsequently persuaded by the curate to reconcile themselves to religion and morality by marrying their old wives over again in church, in an atmosphere of penitent, religious awe, appropriate to a deferred sacrament, like adult baptism. Edith had understood me as little as I understood that her anxiety turned all upon the question which sometimes fills half a volume in High Church novels for the young, — was the bridegroom a good-enough churchman to wish the full Communion Service added to that for the solemnization of Holy Matrimony?

The extent of our misunderstanding began to dawn first on me, and then I set myself to explain. God forgive me! I still had a sense of capable condescension, as if we were acting Faust and Gretchen in the Catechism scene. Edith listened, and I supposed was following my lucid rendering of the poet's *Name ist Schall und Laut*, when presently she stopped, loosed my arm, and faced me with a pitiful look. "Arthur, I don't think I am clever

enough to understand all that. Does it mean" — she paused, rather as if she were the martyr called upon to make confession with a stake in sight — "does it mean that you believe in God and our blessed Saviour, or does it mean something else?"

At last, not without rage at my own blindness, I saw all the danger. My heart sank. I said, "Edith, sweetheart! my first and only love! tell me, Edith, now, at once — do you love me, dear?"

She laid her hand on my arm; perhaps I had never before felt such a longing for the love that still delayed to answer. I had been so sure of my happiness, I had never before felt the aching need of a woman's all-embracing, all-overmastering tenderness, and instead of the longed-for, self-forgetting welcome, she looked at me still as if we were leagues and centuries apart, and she asked again, with the same frightened, pitiful look, "Forgive me for being so stupid. I don't quite understand. Does it mean that you are — that you believe — in Christianity or no?"

Seeing her distress, I had no right to complain of the chill I felt at having my own appeal unanswered. The rest of our conversation was difficult; she asked me to let her drive home alone; she would write; we must meet another time. I did not feel the less like a fool for being *planté là* in a suburban road, at an unknown distance from a cabstand and Charing Cross. Must a man pass or

set a theological examination before he can offer to the girl of his choice? If Edith had had a father confessor on whom to lay the blame, I should have known what to be at, and could have contented myself with wishing to wring his neck. What was the use of being in the right if one couldn't make its rightness plain to a gentle, loving girl?

The next fortnight was a penitential season. Interviews and *pourparlers* succeeded each other. Edith's family were averse to a rupture on grounds of worldly expediency, and helped to prolong the purgatory by their anxiety to find some ground of compromise. The mother as good as asked me to use a little brief hypocrisy, and touched the borders of good taste in her anxiety to explain how entirely our two interests were one. It is bad for a girl to be talked about as having broken off an engagement; but if it came to that ("as we all hope it mayn't"), the real reason was sure to get known too, and that could not fail to do a man some harm in his profession. As it happened, I knew that a scandal of this sort would do me a certain considerable and special injury at once, but I answered grimly it would signify the less if I had no wife depending on my success. After this reach of distracting uncertainty, it was settled I was to see Edith once more. It was a last hope. Would she or I take back something of the words that made any answer but a farewell impossible to the other; or

would she say, as I had all along, let us think apart, if we must, so long as we can love together?

Edith had wished to leave London while the question was pending, and I went to see her at their country house. It was a still, mild October day; the red and yellow of the beechwoods alternated with the dark evergreen firs. There seemed to be the same fragrance in the autumn noon as in those summer evenings when her eyes first began to watch for mine. She took me into the garden. A low garden-seat stood in a solitary sunny corner. The unfrequented path was soft with a thick carpet of fallen fir-needles, and the gardener's boy had left a swept-up mound of them just by the seat. I leant on this, that I might look up into her face as she sat. The shadows lengthened while we talked — less painfully, perhaps, than once or twice before, for neither wished to make the inevitable harder than needed to the other. But it was inevitable, and at last the moment for the last parting came.

I have never seen Edith since, and as we parted then so she lives in my memory. As she lives in my memory, so you see her on the panel now. She was standing up, almost tall, very fair, with gray blue eyes, in which tears stood, but would not fall. Her hair was very long and soft and waving, red-brown in the darkest shadows, and bright, bright gold for the rest. Whatever fashions came or went, I do not see how she could ever wear her hair ex-

cept just so, in one soft hanging double twist, that looked the only right way for a woman with soft hair that waved. That afternoon she wore some soft yellow-brown silk, full and simple like the robes of Angelico's angels, and I seem to remember a gold chain round the neck and a spray of myrtle, and some pale yellow lace above the gold bracelet I had given her, and the white hand I might never kiss again.

Our last words had almost been said; she stood up, and I a pace or two away. A stack of withered bracken filled the space between the tree stems behind, and a spreading beech intercepted the light of the western sun. Her figure appears before me now, erect against this russet background. The hands are half outstretched, as if refusing to wring themselves in helpless anguish; and in her eyes, through the tears, there is still the same far-away look that chilled my soul on the day when she did not answer my first and last appeal — a longing, pleading, unrelenting look; and while the tender lips seem to breathe, "Will you not stay with me?" the outstretched hands and far-off eyes utter the doom of banishment, "I may not come with you."

And so, as I left her, I see her still; and through the angry impatience of a lover who had counted for less than he thought, I could not but respect the single-hearted strength that drove me out. She had

had no doubt or struggle. If I did not or could not see the truth as she did, it did not seem so much to her that we must part, as rather that we had never met. The keenest part of the blow to me was knowing that she had never for a moment thought of loving me too much to care whether I was to go to hell or heaven. But at the moment when I resented this most strongly — what right had she to accept my love if hers was so slight a thing? — the just afterthought obtruded itself too: Had *I* felt any temptation to change myself, my life, my creed, for her love's sole sake?

In the Second Panel.

Was it all a horrible illusion, and had we never loved at all; and if not, what then was love; who could tell, did any know? I looked all round, and thought what Edith and I had meant, for love was more like it than most of the substitutes that seemed to pass current in the world unchecked. Was it then a loveless world, and happiness the share only of boys and girls whose bubbles had not burst as yet?

I did not stop to ask such questions. With that last fair vision fresh in memory, I left England, grimly conscious that a man in my plight might fairly be expected to earn his allotted fate by starting promptly on some headlong road to ruin. But to me this seemed a *non sequitur*. What though

Edith were twice the heartless fanatic I had a right to call her: what was there in that to give me a new taste for brandy or the society of cads? If the best of women were not quite good enough for the needs of men, was it worth while to seek deliverance among the worst? One must live every day among pleasures that turn to vice in their excess, to go to ruin this way when the check of daily motives for restraint is loosed. One is not now held only to decency by a single knot, easy to cut.

I was content with the common distractions of travel off the beaten track in Italy. The chestnut woods of the Apennines were kind to me, and the girls had all black hair; it was a folly, but I left one pretty village unvisited because an English family with golden-haired *bambini* was said to be lodging there. The weeks passed, and brought a kind of calm. I wondered whether I was ceasing to dread the sight of my kind, or forgetting that the sight might come — almost any day now, for I was nearing Florence, and could hardly reach untrodden ground again without taking to the railway. I had been following the moment's impulse, and without much purpose bade my last host drive me in his *calessino* to the Pontassieve station. I thought vaguely of picking up the fast evening train to Arezzo and then wandering off again. But when the Fates are ready for us, small chances will serve their turn. On the platform, waiting for the train

to Florence, was a man I knew, a good fellow, officer in a rather fast regiment; and as he recognized me with effusion, I noticed he was not alone; there was with him the most beautiful woman I ever saw, and she had waving gold-brown hair.

I tried to escape, but the good fellow held me fast. "You must know the Diva," he said. I, with unseemly emphasis, "No, no, NO!" He said, "Why not?" and I, "I don't like golden hair."

At this he laughed cheerfully, and grasping me by main force, called to the woman whose hair was like Edith's. "Signora, Signora! come and chain this fugitive. I want him in Florence, and he offers to run away because you have golden hair."

Then, with the most musical voice, save one, I have ever heard, she said, "Would you run away from me because some one else had golden hair? Come and see the red-gold of the oranges in the sunset glow, and the pure gold dust of the fragrant lemon blossoms, and after that you will call the hair of women brown or yellow, or the shade of dusty ashes. Come, come, come! but we will not wait for the train," and like some enchantress whose look is a spell, she pointed to an open carriage just outside the barrier; and without excuse or explanation, in an instant the young Italian who was driving had turned his companions adrift, gave the reins to his groom, and took his place by our side. "Have

you told him to the villa?" said the Diva; "we four dine together to-night."

Eleanora sang to us that night; we saw the stars come out, and the ripe lemons shone like silver in the moonlight. The villa seemed a palace, and I breathed freely. It was all as unlike what I was fleeing from as the massy jet plaits of the Tuscan peasant girls; for tables, here and there were carved chests and slabs of porphyry, the polished fragments of an ancient bath; for chairs, cushions of every size, and shape, and substance, and no other furniture but flowers, easels, and instruments of music. She made the Italian sing to us some Neapolitan songs of the people, and she prayed my friend to write down the air of two that were new to her. Then she turned to me and said, "Did she use you very ill, that fair one with locks of gold?"

And I, to whom my oldest friends had never dared so much as to seem to think, let alone speak, of our broken engagement — I answered readily, "Not at all; she is a charming girl, and she threw me over *pour l'amour de Dieu*. Now I come to think of it" — and I made this discovery as I spoke — "the only thing that troubles me in the matter is a misgiving whether *le bon Dieu* will be as kind to her as I should have been."

"Is that the only reason," and her eyes laughed, "why you don't like golden hair?"

"No," I answered, still without a shade of reluc-

tance; "it reminds me of the troublesome problem I have never yet solved to my mind's contentment, whether Edith ever loved me at all, or only thought she did; and what love is, and whether anybody knows?"

Eleanora made herself a deeper nest in the pale green cushions, and she turned the nearest lamp round, so that the light fell away from us. "If you ask me as an oracle," she said, "I will answer: — Half of Edith's nature loved half of yours, and she and you did not know there was any more of either; and what love is takes many days to tell, and few there be that have ears to understand the tale."

At eleven the Italian rose to go. I went with my friend to his hotel, and acquiesced in plans that took for granted I should stay in Florence. Twice more I saw the Diva. Those who had never been favored by her notice laughed, and hinted her favor was given lightly and to many; but I have heard her spoken of, and never without a shade of tender respect, by men who were pointed at as her discarded lovers. To me she was generous and good. Nothing passed between us but talk, rash and idle if you please; but I entered the Via —— still sore and sick at heart, and I left it healed and strong for the manifold chances of life.

We soon gave up the attempt to converse in English, the language of reserve and reticence; she spoke in Italian and I in French; thus we were

both free to think as well as to speak what came to us. I said again, "Did Edith love me or I her? What is love, and how to build it on a sure foundation? Can immortal love lodge with mortals, and infinite passion hold together the narrow boundaries of single souls? Is it our first wisdom to renounce the dream, or with closed eyes to say we are not yet awake; or can we, seeing and knowing, not in dreams, but alive and waking, can we find a truth fairer and sweeter than an everlasting fair sweet dream? Tell me this," I said, "O wise Diotima! and if indeed love is not all a dream, let me be your scholar, and show me how to love."

She said, not all at once, but as my questions or my silence prompted, "I have known three patterns of happy, life-long love, and two were from your country. The world would be different if there were more like these, but the chances are strong against us. There must be generosity, readiness to apprehend and to conciliate, a high level of personal qualities before any man or woman is safely to be trusted with another's welfare. A small mind may love vehemently, a mean soul tenaciously, and a fickle one tenderly for a time; but the capacity for complete and lasting love carries a patent of nobility, and here our difficulty begins again. For the demands of a full and richly developed nature multiply, and as individuals differentiate themselves — as your philosophers would say — the chances multiply

against complete and spontaneous sympathy between two several natures that have grown up apart. Perfect love grows choicer but more rare as new subtleties of feeling are fed by thoughts and wishes ever growing wider and more manifold; and because men cannot content themselves to be unloved, some seek to build up their own soul's life by loving for a while, now here, now there, the features that do not meet in the one perfect form of a single constant love. As I speak, you think of Goethe, and there have been less famous women with a heart's history not unlike his. The world's chance of happiness in love was greater when simpler lives made simpler feelings, which had the same history in a thousand souls at once, so that any two out of the thousand might pair harmoniously together."

I said, "Shall we then leave this foolish world that works so hard to earn its discontent, and find a place where the hands of time stand still upon the dial and rejoice in the easy loves of bygone days?"

She answered, "If we could! But an appetite once felt lives on till it is starved or satiated, and there are few but have felt once the desire for a difficult pleasure."

"And yet, what is easier than to begin to love?"

"Ay, truly," said the Diva, and her full voice rang out the assent like a challenge; "but is it easy to answer all the questions you hurled at me anon? Consider, too, that love itself has manifold moods,

and since all of these must be shared or answered, perfect love can hardly be where the soul's voice has a narrow compass. There is the hungry passion of covetousness, and the no less eager hunger of devotion; and one must be fed with joyous rapture, and the other with a free acceptance. And then it is not easy to pass unchilled from rapturous enjoyment to the calm delight of loving neighborhood, nor to accept boundless devotion without dulling the keen edge of gratitude which makes acceptance sweet. They know little of love" — her voice was like soft music, and at each pause the air seemed filled with the echo of a far-off minor air — "they know little of love who know only its one face of midsummer sunshine; the eternal sun has its returning morning, night and noonday, and the softest light may come through earth-born vapors; none know the true face of love who cannot bear the changing revolutions of its days and seasons. Some, that sorrow can unite, grow indifferent when middling fortune gives ease for sober years; some, whose hearts beat together in the sunshine, cease to keep pace as the vibrations cool and slacken, and in their slow recurrence feel more and more forcibly the check when the lagging foot of the companion falls out of step."

She was looking out of window, not at, but far away over, the rich luxuriance of the Tuscan spring vegetation, and the dim purple horizon.

I said, "Signora, as you speak one must believe,

as one believes the Siren's song. It is sweet to hear; but tell me, is there anything more than difficulty, such difficulties as these, in the commonplace days of the real working world?"

She roused herself and looked at me with laughing wakeful eyes: "There is for those to whom the grace of love is given, and they" — here the laugh died, and something of defiance, if not of scorn, took its place in her glance — "and they to whom the grace of love is given are few and far between." She looked me in the eyes and said, "I think you want to know the truth: the truth is — it is difficult to love perfectly at all, and most difficult to love perfectly the living love, who *is* imperfect, like the common world, till she and you love perfectly. But it is a real love, and not romantic dreaming, that gives life its crown of glory. Marriage — are you enough of a musician to feel all that this implies? — marriage is like a concert with two conductors. All the thousand and one passions and interests of life are crowding the orchestra, and there is endurable peace if the two choruses are taught to sing in unison. But the true harmony of the spheres, the perfect music of love in life, is made when the two several melodies complete each other, and a third strain of fuller, richer, wondrous beauty rises upon the thrice-blessed ears of those who can order two full lives with one joint omnipotent love. Love may last from an hour to a lifetime; but if you

would have love in marriage, seek a woman who can help you to live as well as to love."

I thought, and that day it seemed natural to think aloud: "But must not married love be equal? and how can a man help a woman in her own life?"

She smiled approvingly: "When a man has modesty, he is not far from the kingdom of love. You are right that a woman is not helped to live her own life by the mere acceptance of the devotion she begins by offering to the man she loves. The fulness of power and life comes to her as she feels that the stay of her devotion is an inspiring force, without which the fulness of power and life would be wanting to her lover as well as to herself. But passionate love is of no sex. I have known men love like women, women love like men, and men and women who loved through the whole scale of rapture and devotion, from sullen bass to the soprano that fades upon the ear for utter shrillness. It is true of all alike that they do not give love its due by the mere acceptance of the offered gift; unless their lives are fed by its acceptance, they rank but with the unloved many, the proselytes of the gate, to whom the entrance of the Holy of Holies is a forbidden mystery."

I almost wondered at the complete acceptance commanded by these subtle doctrines; as I listened it seemed that I was learning by the Platonic route of reminiscence. Nothing seemed strange or doubt-

ful, and I thought of Edith as I might of a sister when I said, "She could have lived in unison with a simple-hearted gentleman of her own faith."

With a faint inflection of impatience Eleanora answered, "Are you afraid I should think you inconstant if you forget Edith for an hour?"

And then it was my turn to smile, "Why should I forget what has nothing ugly about it? Your wisdom is reconciling me to myself and Edith; but tell me, what is constancy in love? for you say, and I believe, that love is feeble and like to die that cannot change with the changing seasons."

She paused longer than usual, then she rose, paced once or twice up the room, and then passed through the window to a balcony commanding the same view, only here we saw it stretching far round on either hand. I followed and stood some paces behind her, then she shivered and said, "Let me show you my watch-tower." We re-entered the house, and she led me up-stairs, through a pretty room, half studio, half boudoir, to a circular door in the corner.

In the corner of the house outside one saw, as it were, half a round turret projecting beyond the southeast angle, and the inner half of the round corner tower was formed by this door. I followed her into a tiny circular cell; all the outer wall was window, and there was no furniture except a few cushions on the floor and window sills. She sat

down carelessly at the foot of the embrasure, leaning her arm on the ledge, and then she said, "I brought you here because this is the one spot in the world where I have never felt cross, wronged, misunderstood, unfortunate, unblessed." There seemed a strange incongruity in such words on the lips of a creature so gloriously endowed, not with beauty only and an angel's voice, but with a wise and tolerant tenderness that seemed fit to sweeten countless lives.

She went on, "I sought the protection of the *genius loci* because I am more often provoked by talk of constancy than anything else of which men talk in ignorance. A constant love is one that knows how to change; for growth is change, and living love must grow; and there are changes which are not growth and yet not unfaithfulness. What is called the treachery of women is often only their failure to respond to a change in the lover's mood, which they could not foresee, and have no cause to share. But the changefulness of perfect love has its root in this — every change in the loved one *is* foreseen and every changing feeling shared. No change within or without, on either part, can take perfect love at unawares, or make the eternal change its unchanging nature; every other wish and hope and passionate impulse may be called upon to change and answer with immovable fidelity to the call, in order that, by their death, love may renew its life,

and the one faithless change be escaped — of ceasing to love the very soul and body that had once been known, and loved as it was known to be. I am angry often with those who take the name of love in vain, because they call it inconstancy if love is withdrawn from the detected hypocrite. Not he, but the something better that he seemed to be, was loved; and even if, instead of hypocrisy in another, there is ignorance and blindness in ourselves — even then, when we see too late, love at all costs must be true, and it is profaning a sacrament to ape the sacred feeling towards one who has no right to call it forth."

She spoke with heat, and the missing sweetness of her tones left me free to answer instead of acquiescing silently. I questioned, "Is it not a duty to assure ourselves that we know the real true nature before we lead another to look to us for love?"

She spoke more calmly, and with a half smile. "What is called the inconstancy of men may be defended too. It is often only a sign of the unchangeableness of their ideal — they find too late that the vision is not realized where they thought, and they go to seek elsewhere. You ask if they are wrong? Perhaps they are not right; but is it then more right never to risk a generous trust that may justify itself in time? If it were forbidden to love in faith, can you promise that all should have sight enough of good to love by? No; love must dare

— dare to hope and dare to suffer. It is easy, is it not," she added, "to speak of bold endurance in this sheltered nook? Can you wonder that I feel as if pain and trouble could never enter here, only friendship and the deep interest that springs from friendly contact with the deepest interests of hearts like enough our own to understand and be understood?"

I said, "This nook of yours, Signora, has been to me a very haven of refuge from a storm that left me rudderless. Through all my life I shall feel as if there were some natural bond between the uplifting of a moral incubus (*did* Edith love me or I her?) and the intense luminous blue sky with the gnarled bough and silver-tipped leaves of your olive tree against it, framing the sunny plain and the dim purple hills far off."

The expression of her face was no longer plain to read. I looked at her questioningly and said, "It is hard to have nothing to offer in return for such fair memories."

She answered, "And you have nothing?" looking at me still with a perplexing gaze, half curiosity, expectancy, and whether invitation or reproach was more than I could tell.

She was incomprehensibly beautiful with this sphinx-like expression on her perfect features; and though I had only spoken of the background to the vision I must remember, I promised myself to see always her graceful form in a gray embrasure be-

tween me and the olive bough across the sunlit sky. I was looking at her as one looks at an inanimate scene of beauty, and started in confusion when she answered my looks with a questioning "Well?"

I answered, as I had not meant, "You have been very good to me, Signora."

She smiled more naturally, and said, "Not very; less than all does not count for anything. And it is an awesome thought how much there is room for between men and women before they come near to having helped each other. There are so many to whom, once for a time, a near relation seems the one thing needful, but there are not many to whom it continues so all through life's length; and such is the force of time and worldly worries, that after a few years have sped it is not so easy as you might think to tell the difference between those who have seen once and never. Many put to sea who dare not cross the ocean, but I think it is not for those who spend their lives in sight of land to speak of the glory and loveliness of the deep."

Surely I did not hear her say — I dreamt that it was with such a look as hers that eyes might say — "Shall we? Nay, but let us tempt the deep together!" Her eyes were like those of a prophetess beholding the manifold secrets of the deep. I knelt and clasped her clasped hands in mine. She may know — I cannot say — whether I felt a moment's

wild desire to tempt the deep that day, and find my happiness at once or never. What I said, kneeling before her in simple adoration of her beauty and gentle graciousness, was but a plain and stupid acknowledgment of so much grace. "Eleanora," I said, "your beauty is to Edith's as the summer sun to the spring twilight, and because you have stooped from your throne to show me kindness, all reverence and worship that a man can lay at the feet of women is due to you from me. Stay, sweet goddess, on your pedestal; it is not you, it is myself I cannot trust. It is easy to want faster than one has strength to merit, and I reverence you too much, Signora, to risk counting in your memory as the hero of one more detected illusion. Do you in generous dreams think of the possibilities I dare not aim at as of something that might have been if it had been ours to meet, as some meet, young and free, knowing enough, and not having felt too much and lately to be able to launch forth upon the ocean of life in common and limitless love? Whether the best there is comes to us, to me, hereafter or not at all, let me think always of a best that might have been; and at least, if there is nothing on earth good enough to make the best for you, let me be guiltless in the day of that sad proof."

She said, "Then we part now; even my charmed turret falls under the common doom."

And I, "No, a thousand times no. Wronged,

misunderstood, unfortunate, unblessed; may those dooms be ever as far from you as they are now; only, as the poet says, let us leave 'a good to die with dim-descried;' and I, who have missed once the good I sought, wish selfishly that if you miss or do not seek that self-same good, you shall think of me and the missing good together."

She said, "I wish my turret was the palace of truth." Then, with nonchalance, as she gave me her hand in farewell, "You know your way to the garden?"

I dared not linger after this dismissal; so it was but the vision of one anxious moment that I had to bear away with me. I have never seen Eleanora since, and as we parted then so she lives in my memory. I think the eyes whose language I had so often failed to read were hazel-brown; they looked at me with questioning sadness, half reproach, half invitation. Why are you not worthy to stay, here and now, to love your best forever? And yet it was neither reproach nor invitation so much as a dark sadness like the leaden casket, "which rather threatens than does promise aught." Oh, the sadness that there should be an ineffable bliss on earth, and men not bold to seize it!

All this, sadness, anger and tender sweetness, lent an inscrutable depth to the meaning of her gaze as I saw her leaning in the embrasure. Her dress was of a pale greenish-blue velvet, stamped with ara-

besque figures. I know the sleeves were short; a woman's wrist is sometimes strangely beautiful; she had opened the casement and gathered half a handful of heliotropes, which encroached from a near balcony. The flowers rested against her dress, and I saw nothing but her one figure, framed in the embrasure of the window, with its tiny background of intense blue sky, and just one olive branch, with its narrow leaves and soft gray-green shadows, crossing the azure, and arching over the sad, radiant, enigmatic face.

. . . . . .

I am not going to say how many years had passed betwen these two partings and my wife's last birthday gift. She had seen Edith at church and Eleanora at the opera, and I had photographs of both. I gave her the key of my Blue Beard's closet before we married, and I thought she had made a pretty use of it.

Sir Alfred Osborne's portrait of my wife hangs above the diptych. She is painted without surroundings on a background of pure shadow, such as the old masters of portraiture love. She is leaning backwards in her chair, and her pose is so arranged that she looks down upon the gazer, and yet her eyes look fully into his. And her gaze has neither sadness nor complaint, but the repose of unchanging, confident tenderness. She does not seek, or

call or banish; she makes welcome her secure possession.

I do not care to show these paintings to every one; but in showing them to the few, I gather from the way in which they look at all three faces whether or no they have yet found out for themselves that a woman's eyes are the windows of the palace of everlasting love.

III.

"Some One Had Blundered."

Deßwegen auch nichts schrecklicher ist, als die Unwissenheit handeln zu sehen.

—Goethe.

III.

IT was the time of one of our periodical scares; there was a "crisis" in the East, and to keep up the spirits of a patriotic population, the troops in London were being put through an extra quantity of manœuvring in Hyde Park. I saw no reason to give up my daily morning constitutional from the Albert Gate to the Marble Arch by a meandering diagonal and back, and I started as usual at nine o'clock on the anniversary of a day that had rather melancholy associations. It was a morning to make one forget them. The leaf buds were opening fast, but only the chestnuts had reached their full greenness; the elms were still tipped with promises, and seemed to argue with us that spring was only coming — not even yet quite here. All distances were lost in mist, and even the brightest lights seemed shining through it from afar. These lights were the gilded summit of the Albert Memorial, and the still white marble of the geographical groups at its four corners. I never admired that work of art, but Nature, here as elsewhere, now and then casts a veil over the architect's blunder-

ing; and with a pale morning sky behind and something of the dawn's rosiness between, the eye might rest with pleasure on the glimmering lights which but for the Memorial had not been there.

One may almost measure the pleasantness of a walk by the unconsciousness with which we pass through time and distance. I can recall no distinct perception of things without or thoughts within till ten minutes or more later, when I was past the guard-house and upon the slanting path which leads without a break or bend to the corner of Oxford Street. On the right, in the open space towards the Reformers' Oak, several bodies of troops were skirmishing. An old soldier is tempted to give a technical description of the movements, which were open to criticism on several points, but that is not my purpose. Lucy (ætat. twelve), who was with me, called out, "Oh, uncle, look! the soldiers are kneeling down to fire, and then they run a little way and kneel and fire again. They are coming this way! whatever shall we do?" I explained the military expedient of seeking cover, and we awaited the onslaught protected by one of the hurdles put up to shelter new-sown grass. A few foot-passengers were on the pathway here and there, but with one or two exceptions they hurried out of the line of advance. Lucy caught hold of my arm as the pointed rifles, the smoke, and the rattle of successive discharges along the line made her feel,

she said, as if we were really "under fire." Then the men charged past us and the hurdles; the right of the line was thrown forward, so that the whole of the front rank did not cross the pathway at once. Those nearest us were on the grass again when the order came to fire, but as we looked back I saw the half section that was in the act of crossing the gravel waver for at least three seconds, — long enough for a volley to strike the advancing mass; the men hesitated whether to kneel where they were and block the footway, or to break their line and leave the passage clear.

I told Lucy to run on to school by herself. It was only a trifle; the men had never been on active service, and military manœuvres in England are so much sacrificed to the civil interests concerned, that I think the troops were only doing as their leaders taught them in considering the convenience of the chance passengers at hand rather than the regularity of their own formation. It wasn't the mere break in the line that sent a kind of shudder through me and made me fancy I felt my old wound ache; it was the fatal hesitation, the outward and visible signs of the old lamentable fact that our troops are habitually sent forward to confront risks and contingencies with which they have not been prepared to deal. I have a right to speak. Twice my best hopes in life have been spoilt because the army in which I had enlisted was undisciplined,

and — it would be a breach of discipline to say badly commanded — I mean not commanded *enough* — left without orders in a crisis when salvation could only be found in perfect wisdom above and perfect, prompt obedience below.

I have no country of my own, and as a citizen of the world I am pained alike by the reminders that meet me everywhere of the expanding torrent of mischances that pours upon the devoted head of those in whose fellowship "some one has blundered." It is a hard saying that in both war and politics it is impossible for a man to do his duty single-handed; he may do all he can, but he can't do all that is set him unless his comrades help by doing their task too. One man cannot even be wise alone; his wisdom fails if he does not make others see with him, or find and join with friends enough who see with him already.

I was a boy of nineteen when Thomas Davis died in '45. My father died two years before; he was a thorough Irishman, but he died suddenly and left no will. He was the second son of a rich contractor, who had invested the fortune he made during the war in estates in England and Ireland. My uncle, the eldest son, who held the English property, was a stiff Conservative: he was my guardian, and having no sons of his own, his wish was to make me English enough to be his heir. I had matriculated at Trinity a month before my father died, and

had a hard fight to be allowed to stay there. My guardian insisted on Oxford, or at least Cambridge, if I was bent on mathematics. I got my way on this point by invoking my father's wish, but in return, by what I thought a small revenge, my allowance was cut down to the minimum on which a man could live, so that all at once I was left powerless to help with funds the national movement of which my father had been a keen supporter, and to which he had allowed me, as a boy, to contribute as I pleased in my own name.

Between shame and fury I told the story to Davis, raging at the English uncle, and complaining that I was helpless and useless to him now. I was half comforted, half humiliated, by the compassionate, tolerant smile with which he said, "I wish we had an honest man in earnest for every guinea you would have liked to give us;" and then with frank courtesy he added, "You bring us one to begin with." Such words from young Ireland's chief made boys and men loyal; but Davis died before his time for leading came, and I, a disappointed man, turn faithless now and wonder whether, even if he had lived, he would have struck out a policy such as Irishmen could have followed in union to success.

While he lived we had hopes; he was waiting his opportunity. Opportunity comes to those who know how to wait, and we felt certain that in due

time he would bid us follow him to seize the opportunity. We were young and eager, and hoped the call would be a call to arms. Years afterwards it was with as much envy as good-will that I watched Garibaldi's deliverance of the two Sicilies: young Ireland would have immortalized itself by death or victory if a campaign like that had been possible to us then. Davis was for neglecting no chance of peaceful constitutional agitation, but I doubt now whether he realized how narrowly we were hemmed in by alternative impossibilities. He thought we should have been ready to fight as a last resource, and held that O'Connell was feeble if not false when he failed to stand by his "Defiance." He did not see that men are only ready to fight a losing battle to the death when death or victory are their only chances. Ireland would have had a better chance if England had been more like Austria; that is why so many Irishmen hate English good intentions more than anything else English.

Davis welcomed every small concession. Ireland free and prosperous, he thought, had less to fear from bad government than Ireland prostrate and pauperized; and yet, if there was ever to be an appeal to arms, would farmers with a fair lease turn out to fight while red-coats spoiled the homestead? When a nation takes to arms, it has been goaded by intolerable, ubiquitous oppression. I have but one thing to say in extenuation of the English dominion

in Ireland: it has never been so uniformly and systematically cruel as to open the gateway of deliverance made by a nation's passionate despair. Some tyranny breeds heroes; we were crushed by a yoke shameful to bear, inglorious to try and break. It did not seem so then, but I know now we could not have roused the country for a real war of insurrection, and short of warfare we had no resource in reach but to follow Davis' counsel and continue lawful agitation.

But this was accepting the Union. Had we among us any statesmen able to see and strong enough to make their following believe that to deliver Ireland an Irish politician must first revenge her wrongs by conquering her conquerer and seizing a front place in the Imperial Legislature? We did not see things in that light; we thought it was a fine appeal to moral force when, to save the lives of our docile mob, we stood with folded arms, protesting calmly while our lawful liberties were overborne by force. 'Twas a schoolboyish kind of patriotism; Italian schoolboys were happier in dying — even though some died in vain — upon the field of battle; and yet we were not to blame for our shabby fate. It was a part of the situation that political uprightness and daring by itself brought no crown of martyrdom, and who can believe in the magnanimity of a rebel who runs no risks? And then in desperation and defiance some courted such risks

as they could find, and instead of a crown of martyrdom in an Austrian fortress, found the disgrace that a lodging in clean English gaols reserves for rioters or incendiaries. Our roughest roughs would have made good patriots in less smooth and civilized days, but I doubt whether they were ripe for the enthusiasm on behalf of peaceful measures without which the wisest leader is but an idle voice crying in the wilderness.

Anyway, the end was, that it all came to nothing. I wasn't the last to leave the sinking ship. I had trusted Davis more than any of the rest, and when he died I felt as if we were a crew without a captain. Loud counsels were plenty, but none of them seemed so wise and helpful that I, who felt a youth's longing to follow some one with enthusiasm, could give myself up to following any one of them. I had some thoughts of shooting Peel and blowing my own brains out afterwards, but even that expedient seemed a doubtful promise. What I did was to write and ask my guardian if he would buy me a commission in the ——th, which was just ordered on foreign service. My uncle gave a delighted consent; some one had told him of the verses of mine Duffy was good-natured enough to print in the *Nation*, and he was overjoyed at the thought of getting me out of the country in some other character than that of a convict.

From that day to this I have never revealed the

secret thought that urged what my friends thought almost disloyal desertion. I saw our cause was hopeless then. When we asked ourselves if Peel could be induced to make this or that concession, the answer again and again would be, "Whatever Peel might say, the Duke would be dead against it." But Arthur, Duke of Wellington, was an Irishman. I thought, "Let a loyal Irishman win another Waterloo, and instead of a dukedom ask for his wages leave to carry three Irish Bills." With the ardor of a disappointed lover I threw myself upon the study of fortification and tactics, and as I read at the antipodes of one failure after another, and then of my country's misery, famine and pestilence added to every other woe, I still held to the wild ambition of earning in the English army the power and the right to serve and save Ould Ireland.

It was a boyish dream, and as years went by, I thought, no doubt, less and less of that distant end, and grew more and more absorbed in the interests of my profession. When we were ordered to the Crimea, I thought more of the pleasure of engaging in real, scientific warfare, of the chance of making a known name for myself, than of the chance, years afterwards of being "sent for to the Queen." Our regiment was the first to land, and thenceforward the army was my nation.

In Ireland I had had to watch the ruin of a cause without knowing what to do to save it. It was

worse now. I knew, at least in part, what needed to be done, but I was powerless even to do all my own duty well, since to do it all would have involved doing also that of two or three adjoining functionaries whose bungling blocked my way. What came to be known as the breakdown of the commissariat was but a sample of the official incompetence which permeates the whole national administration. Clever officials would have pacified Ireland as a mere matter of routine. The English Constitution had need be good and the English people docile, since the one has to be administered and the other governed by an amalgam of clerks and amateurs. Irresponsibility and impotence for good, turn our permanent officials into clerks, while party politicians come into office untrained in anything but Parliamentary debate. When administration was half as difficult and complicated as it is now, paternal statesmen educated their sons for public life and acted towards them as if the art of ruling could be taught. Now a young man is tossed to sink or swim in an election, and not one in ten is able to forget the electioneering tone when he is landed in the House, to realize that members are not constituents, and that there is no connection at all between the practical importance of measures and their estimated influence on a personal reputation. I for one believe that a trained and able politician would be followed for his measures' sake,

if they were good, without having to labor straightway to conciliate the sweet voices of his colleagues; but lawful modesty bids men without training or experience take a deprecatory tone, and so there is and end of government.

I am digressing, but it is more seemly for a soldier to rail at statesmen than at his own commanders, and I have seen since then at work in peace all the causes of our needless discomfiture in those days of war. I am not going to rake up the stories of old blundering. I wasn't reckoned with the croakers then, and only risked a little chaff now and again by hinting at safe rules for doing what our gallant young officers liked to leave to the moment's inspiration.

On a spring evening in 1855, a party of us had been entertaining some yachtsmen at dinner, and after they left us, we still stayed smoking in the moonlight to enjoy the summer-like coolness. Colonel —— and an officer of the staff were present, and somehow we drifted into an argument. Perhaps I took more trouble to say all I meant, in hopes that some of it would, if I convinced my men, reach headquarters at second-hand.

I argued that nothing ought to be uncertain in war; that a general ought to be able to calculate by instinct what each movement would cost him in lives, and to risk no step that hadn't a clear purpose, which could be served no cheaper way. I

said ignorance in such a matter was criminal; it was murder for a man to march his troops at random under fire; every life lost in vain, ay, and every needless wound inflicted, ought to be felt, as it was, a blot of ignominy on the leader's fame.

O'Callaghan, who had exchanged from a regiment at the Cape, in order, as he said, not to miss the fun, said I wanted to bring in a mean commercial spirit of economy — a man who was good for anything didn't count his own risks like that. How could a general who counted them have any dash or boldness? I threw down my cigar in fierce disgust. If generals were asses, that was no reason why we should say it was a general's whole duty to bray aloud. What right has a man to the glory of commanding English troops, if he hasn't the wit to be brave for himself, and at the same time cautious not to waste *their* bravery? Then I told a story of the only sole command I had ever held. It was in South Africa, and we took a Kafir kraal with the loss of just ten men killed and wounded. I asked O'Callaghan how he would feel if, after calculating how to bring his men up so as to have them under fire for the shortest time, he caught himself at once in some dull blunder which doubled their exposure? I knew all about the family history of the four men killed that day. If one of them had been killed by my default, should not I have felt myself a murderer disgraced? Any of us can see and feel this in a

small affair; does it alter the inherent responsibility of office that its holder is too dull even to know what are the consequences of his own neglect?

I dared not mention instances of whole companies that had been sacrificed — halted without cover under fire, merely because their leader didn't quite know what to do with them next. Even a general complaint seemed too like an accusation against familiar names, and with a feeling that I had gone too far, and to turn the subject, I expressed a wish that the military colleges would do a little more to familiarize their students with the kind of calculation they have to make in practice. In Africa, I used to get my men to practise charging on the level, up and down hill, and over broken ground, so that I could tell within three seconds how long they would be covering a strange reach of ground. Why should not our cadets be practised in judging pace and distance by the eye?

The Major, who loves sport as much as he hates science, took up his parable here, and narrated wondrous feats of sight and judgment by Scotch keepers and Canadian trappers, tales which seemed to carry so plain a moral that I didn't think it needed saying, "If these men can do so much for a livelihood and sport, we should not reckon less to make a soldier's duty." But as we turned in, O'Callaghan put his hand on my shoulder by way

of encouragement or consolation, while he laughed, "Old boy! so the Major shut you up for once!"

The next day we had a little brush with the enemy. It was not one of the famous battles, and I will give no clue for identifying the affair. Let it suffice to say that my company was stationed under cover in reserve, while our guns tried to silence a small battery the Russians had opened during the night. I was glad of the job, for I knew we should carry the battery easily, and a little triumph like that does wonders for the troops' health and spirits; but my satisfaction was cut short. The French were making a demonstration on the other side, and a regiment had just passed behind the battery, but within musket range of it, on the way to reinforce the Russian advanced posts. I noticed that the fire of our guns began to slacken, and looking from them to the enemy, I saw another regiment following on the same line. They should have doubled their fire, lengthening the range now and then, so as to drop a shot into the thick green mass. Instead, the slackening fire was interpreted by the order brought me to charge the guns. I asked for nothing better than to charge the guns; but was it possible —— did not see that just before we reached the battery the advancing regiment would be within range; five minutes later it would have passed? We were still concealed; but *could* —— imagine that if we showed ourselves the Russians would be even

greater fools than we were and fail to greet us with a volley in flank?

I had no choice but to obey without delay; even if I had had courage enough to seem slow to act on the order to advance, my delay would only have caused a choice of evils, for the Russian battery re-opened fire the moment our guns stopped to leave the field for infantry to charge. I would do all I could to spare my men, but when it came to a question between them and others, they and I were one, and we claimed the post of honor. When the order reached me, I stopped no longer than it takes for the eye to turn once to right and left; there was no help for it; I was blameless in the matter; and casting all care behind, I gave myself up to the delight of martial passion.

It did not last long — what keen pleasure ever does? — but while it lasted I was glad; the pride of life was in my veins. I am inclined to question whether those who have never led a forlorn hope, know what glorious gladness is: one has left life behind; all life's triumphs are summed up in the feeling that one rushes gladly to encounter death; all the fierce selfishness of animal passion, which we quell as may be in the days of peace, finds an outlet here, and feeds our delight in the tumult and savageness of war; and yet we do well to rejoice in our rage, for we charge at the call of duty, and pay with our life-blood for the moment's glory.

We had to charge first over broken ground and then in a slant uphill; the danger from the flank fire came in the last part of the advance. I gave the word for a rapid double, and as the pace was uniform uphill, the square, formed by our double line grew into a blunt diamond; I led the way at the foremost corner, keeping my eye upon the nearing battery. I had nothing to do with the green-coated mass upon the left; it was nothing to me whether they knew their business or no; my business was to reach the guns alive, if they and destiny would let me. I looked back and was pleased; notwithstanding the pace, our lines were almost even. There was a white fan-shaped patch of cirrhus vapor on the clear blue sky that met my eye in front; perhaps I should not have known that I saw it but for what happened next. A sound like a thunderclap struck me in the face. I felt blind and shaken; I remember no other feeling.

It was three in the afternoon when we charged; the sun had set, but its redness had not quite left the sky when I woke to consciousness. I felt no pain, only a giddy faintness, till I tried to move, when an unearthly pain went through my side, followed by a soothing sense of warmth, and then blessed unconsciousness. When I woke again the moon was running wildly through thin clouds; heaped-up fleecy masses swept along, but it was not like the sky I knew; it is one thing to walk erect

and give the stars their names: as I lay prostrate on the ground, with burning lips and a pain I dared not examine lest worse came of it, thus lying, with nothing sane but sight about me, it seemed as if I did not see the human sky: figures and shades were there; it melted into a dim travesty of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Adam's face looked out threateningly; a singing in my ears seemed to say, "Fallen, fallen, fallen;" and as in broken dreams one catches one's self saying half a sentence that has no meaning, my brain took up the cry unthinkingly, and I found myself repeating, as if it were a thought, "To fall is a blunder," "Falling, falling down;" and answering to the words was a sea-sick feeling of sinking, sinking through the earth, while overhead the moon and clouds whirled round, now seeming to be part of me, mingling with the kaleidoscopic colors my bloodless eyes saw in vacancy, and then again vanishing in distance as night fell upon the nerveless limbs. Weapons have changed since Homer, but dying is much the same as in the "Iliad."

Again I woke: it was dark; my limbs were stiff and chill; I felt as if floating alone in the darkness; the hard ground touched me like a blow, but the darkness above and below seemed equally near, equally far. There was something maddening in the sense of a possessing pain when every other perception was stunned or blinded. I saw and heard and felt nothing without, only within an

agony of pain and terror. I was trying again to argue as I had the night before, but in the delirium of the wound fever I was haunted by a thought that, if I could only find the mathematical formula for the two rates of advance, and find it quickly, I should save the lives of Hincks and Bendall. Heaven only knows what put the names of these poor fellows (who got off scatheless, by the way) into my wandering brain; but all through that night, and through weeks of fever afterwards, my ravings were all meant to explain how, if we could only measure the angle AEI, our men would be as safe as billiard-balls.

The night was haunted with uglier spectres than these. I would advise those who risk an intimacy with cold lead to keep their conscience clean. Nightmares of pain, and fright, and horror are bad enough; madness itself would be a pleasant refuge from the awful terror when ill deeds rise up like swelling phantoms, filling, filling the whole of space, and drawing closer, nearer, till their threatening touch dissolves into a thrill of pain, and we awake from black unearthly visions into the more bearable consciousness of "real night," and a human body impaled upon a scrap of lead. An optical delusion which no doctor has ever yet explained to me added to the horrid terror of these hours. In the moonlit twilight I saw the hillside above me, and the surface of the ground, every tuft of grass,

each loose stone, the scattered cartridges, and the distorted figure of a fallen soldier — everything in sight rose from the ground; it seemed to stand up in relief a foot or eighteen inches from the real solid earth. I dared not open my eyes for fear of the ghostly mirage. I dashed my arm out in frantic endeavor to dispel the vision by a touch, and fainted again with the exertion and pain.

The wounded would have been cared for sooner but for the ill success which rewarded our ill-timed attack. The volley which knocked me down put an end to the work of many better fellows; the rest kept on gallantly and reached the battery, only to find themselves met hand-to-hand with equal numbers from the infantry reserve. Our loss was heavy. O'Callaghan fought like a hero, and with a broken arm led off the survivors, who retreated, firing so steadily that little further harm was done them. But the battery remained with the enemy (for that night only); and so it was not till the moon had set that surgeons were allowed to go forward with a party to bring in the wounded. I was unconscious when they came, and, with few intervals, for some weeks afterwards. It was in one of the intervals I heard the surgeons say, in language which, unluckily, I was anatomist enough to understand, that my wound was one to make active service impossible for life. I think the discovery let

me in for another turn of fever; but that's neither here nor there.

After two or three months I was ordered home. General —— and the staff officer who had been with us on the evening before our mishap came to see me before I left. The latter must have mentioned my tirade, for General —— observed benignantly that he was always glad to hear studious young officers reported for gallant conduct; books were all very well, but (this to me) "Real service is a very different thing, as no doubt you have discovered." I felt guilty of a breach of discipline as I replied gravely, "Very different, General."

Of course my career was at an end: it was years before I was able to walk, and the least exertion would displace the imperfectly united fracture. I spent some years in Italy, and saw Garibaldi enter Naples, but no new ambition came to take the place of those that had been balked. Few men are able, when their life is spoilt, to gather up the fragments and make a fresh start: I wasn't one of the few. My uncle wanted me to go into Parliament, but I didn't care to be there unless as a power, and I had neither health nor energy to set myself to obtain influence in other ways than the one which took my boyish fancy. I did not even live in Ireland. I got an honest man to look after the estates, and so long as they were not mismanaged I felt all was done for them that I could do. I was unfit for the count-

less labors of an "improving landlord;" it was better to attempt nothing than to attempt and fail, and I felt it was too difficult, unless I could have put all my heart and strength in it. I didn't care enough about small local amendments to be able to do that; it was Ireland I wanted to benefit, not my own estate; and though the latter was a fractional part of Ireland, I refused to own any obligation to sink myself in the lesser task when fate had so maliciously cut me off from the pleasant cherishing of wider hopes.

Now that it is quite too late for any reflections to clamor about being put in practice, I am willing to admit that part of the judgment that falls on nations and men for blundering is, that the blunder which makes a neighbor's task more difficult acts too frequently on his mind as an excuse. Who knows, after all, whether I was a heaven-born general? It strikes me, if I had been, failing an army, I should have made myself some other following. Failing a war commissariat to organize, I should have developed supply and demand for new industries in Clare. I take my share of responsibility for my own omissions; but, after all, the leaders, whose blunders threw me out of work, took the initiative in leading me into the temptation through which I fell. "Blundering is falling, falling down." If I had been quite sane during that night upon the field, I might have said, "The man who falls into a

blunder pulls his neighbor down, and every fresh fall is a weight dragging on the steps of those who walk erect, and crushing the fallen into further depths."

For God's sake, let men make a conscience of not blundering at their work — especially at the work of ruling men and handling troops!

IV.

Midsummer Noon.

"Why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!" — BROWNING.

IV.

I KNOW a man who has been laughed at, off and on, these thirty years, for the one act of his life that he has never regretted. If you want a true story, I can tell you his.

Thirty years ago Nice was less like Paris than now, but gay *fêtes* were held at a certain villa, and my hero had been at one of them. Something in Ariadne's eyes emboldened him to spend the night in trespassing in villa gardens whence he could get a glimpse of the window he thought was hers; and by the time the sun had risen, his courage had risen too, to the level of pen, ink and paper. It wasn't easy to see the eldest daughter of a large family alone, and he had a not unnatural dread of having his romance spoilt by some prosaic interruption, or turned into an undying jest by the mischief of an *enfant terrible*. In a letter at least no sentence risked being cut short in an unfinished caress. So he wrote, but waited self-denyingly till nine o'clock to send his messenger with the note, lest Ariadne should still be sleeping after that intoxicating waltz.

The messenger was long returning. A whole long

hour, and minutes over. Arnold did not know that a mortal hour could be so long. Would she be angry with his presumption? He could not help writing some of the passionate love he felt; if — oh, terror! — if she did not care for him, would she not resent, would she not have a right to resent, his daring to love her so passionately without her leave? But then, too, surely, she was not one to give her love unasked; he must win her by patient, passionate love and pleading. How should she care for him? what was there in him for her to care for except his love? had he let his love plead urgently enough, with all the eloquence of his despairing longing? Had he said too little — not enough to let her see what a desert his life must be if she could not give a gracious hearing to his suit? Had he said too much? Though life would be desolate without her, God forbid that her life should be spoilt out of her pure compassion — she should choose freely — he shrank with horror from the tyranny of threatening: love me or I cannot live; but his thought in writing had been: darling, love me; how can I live, darling, without your love! and yet for her sake he could not wish to be loved for pity. The wretched letter — he loved her so well; but how was she to guess it when he had said nothing that he wished, when what he had said was all wrong and foolish, and seemed now to mean everything that was furthest from his loving thoughts?

But then, again, she was so sweet and gentle, every word and deed found charitable interpretation in her open heart. Surely she would understand and not think ill of one who loved her — she who understood people so easily would surely understand how much. But then, why had she sent no word of answer? She must know how he was waiting for his fate. Was it possible that she would not write? would she meet him without writing? would she neither write nor meet him? He watched the minute hand go round; his hopes died sixty deaths — there was no answer still. How long must he wait? if he started for Villa Franca and her answer come after he was gone? if he started too late, waiting for a message, and she was gone to meet him and he was not there? What cruelty might not be expected from fate, when even she was cruel and had not vouchsafed one word to comfort his despair?

He was leaning his head upon his hands in such deep despair, that Luigi, with a note, had knocked twice — it was a quarter past ten — before Arnold started up to bid him enter. He had a long story to tell: they had sent him from the villa to the yacht — (she wrote in haste, and the soft pencil lines were blurred — he saw nothing but "Your loving" at the bottom); — the yacht was anchored out at sea, the young ladies were being rowed out to it in a boat — (was he dreaming, or did this line read

"Yes, yes, yes"?) Giuseppe said the yacht would sail long before a rowboat from the shore could reach her, that the English milord would be back to-day or to-morrow, and my business might wait so long — (Arnold had neither heard nor read; he could not read her secret words with his chattering rascal's eye upon him; he must hear the story and let him go) — "And then La Gimella heard and said — my sister's son is going to marry his daughter, and they are all clever boatmen — he was to take fish and poultry to the yacht before she started, and he offered to do my business for me. But I am most discreet, Signor" — (confound you!) — "and said that I had something of importance to deliver to the cook, who is my cousin's brother-in-law; and then La Gimella took me in his boat, and I gave the Signorina the letter as I passed her; and then quite openly, when she read it, she called me to her, and gave me thanks, and the sails were set and the Gimella shouted for me to follow to the boat; but the gracious and noble young lady wrote in pencil hastily, and bade me give this to my master and say they would be on shore again at night, but she could not say the hour."

Arnold swore one or two grateful oaths and bade the messenger begone. He threw himself again upon the scrap of paper and read: — "Dearest, I have no time to think how to say yes, yes, yes; the yacht is ready to sail — if I could answer your letter

as it deserves! As we pass Villa Franca, how I shall long to be with you there! No more. *Addio!* I am called. Your loving — Ariadne."

Nothing seems so incredible as the supreme happiness one has hardly dared to hope for, because one hopes with such a desperate longing. Arnold felt as if it were all too good to be true, till he realized that twelve hours or even more might pass before he could see her — say all he had not said, and learn with his own ears to believe that his darling would be gracious. So tremble between joy and pain the souls in purgatory when the message comes for them to enter paradise to-morrow. Who can count the hours of the day that stand between us and heaven?

One thing at least he might do; and hasting as if time were short, still in his rough undress, he repaired to the jeweller's shop, kept by a well-known Roman exile. I will not describe the ring he brought away with him, for his wife wears it always to this day, and I have never seen another like it; every one may think of the ring with which he would choose to celebrate his golden wedding: the ring itself had a chameleon-like mutability, and few who have seen it describe it the same way. Arnold had prayed her to bring the children towards Villa Franca in their walk, and then, when he met them, to turn away into the olive gardens, while the little ones gathered narcissus and anemones.

He felt as if he must keep tryst with his hopes and wear out the hours there.

Had her spirit been there before him? the world never wore such a face before. He walked on air; it seemed as if the world's brilliancy streamed in through every sense; not his eyes alone, but every eager limb felt a vision of the glory that lit up the bright young world. Was this Italy or Hellas, or the very garden of the gods? Truly, he said, she is a daughter of the gods, and I by her love have left the cold world behind. He had not slept: day had dawned upon chill anxiety; now, as he stretched his limbs out in the generous sunlight, he smiled aloud and reproached the school-books for never having told him that the waters of Lethe were so warm. He bathed in the warm air and marvelled, as every care fell from him; what had happened to the glossy carouba tree by the wayside to make it look to him like the glorified spirit of a tree under which gods might rest? Something of a leaden, earthy load was gone from his spirit and the joyous nature round; the shadows of the dark foliage had a green radiance which the dazzling sky could not extinguish.

Was the sky overhead blue or white? A bend in the road let the sea come near, and the water was a deep, dazzling blue, but all the sky was ablaze with sunlight. He thought, "When the islands of the blest want a constitution and a *drapeau*, I will

be their king and choose this tricolor — the blue, white, and green of the heaven-bright South, where the sea is as pure as the sky, the sky invisible like the far-darting Sun-god, and the brown earth veiled in a flickering mantle of silvery and purple green."

Arnold's swinging walk came to a sudden pause; just off the roadway footprints led up a little knoll where a white goat was grazing. He threw himself upon the warm ground, dizzy with the overwhelming sense of rapture. She was trying to read Petrarch yesterday; was it only yesterday he had translated for her: —

> The sea hath not so many creatures 'mid its waves,
> Nor there above the orbit of the moon
> Did ever night behold as many stars:
> The coppice harbors not as many birds,
> Nor field bore ever grasses manifold,
> As are the thoughts that crowd my heart — my love!

And he had read this yesterday, when he knew not what it meant. Yesterday's fulness was a barren hunger, its wisdom unfeeling ignorance; only today he knew and was overwhelmed with the marvels of his knowledge. "O Ariadne! Ariadne!" he murmured half aloud: "Petrarch wrote of what he little knew; better men than I have thought they loved, but believe me, darling, none ever loved as I do; for you, my sweet, were then unborn, and who could be beloved as you are?" A lark rose,

and he watched it circling into the sunlit blue. "*Vago augeletto che cantando vai*, tell me," he said, "is it not true that every song and sigh of birds and lovers until now has been but a prophecy and archetype of the love that waits on Ariadne!" The bird made no answer save with the trills that vanished into space, and the soft silence came to Arnold like assent, and he hid his face with love and shame. "O Ariadne! Ariadne! what have I done to be crowned with happiness above that of all the worthy lovers of old time?"

Something like a tear stood in his eye. There is no brighter light beneath the heavens than the twinkling flashes with which sea and sun hold converse; but the surpassing brilliancy of that brightness is known only to the few who have felt it flash upon their souls through a love-born tear. Arnold was looking out to sea, and he smiled like a happy child at the forgiving brightness. And again his senses rested upon the melting harmony of gray and green; the downy olive shimmered in the sunlight, and its silver glitter made the calm gray stone pines show green; while close by, the wild myrtle and trailing caper and the overhanging carouba with its bursting pods bore witness that flower and seed time had their turn in Arcady.

Arnold was half ashamed of the vehemence of his passion. He walked on more soberly, and reflected with pleasure that he had the other day

defended Petrarch from the charge of exaggeration and unreality; people had laughed at him, taking for irony the grave earnestness with which he said Laura's lover was the most literally truthful of immortal poets. He thought the discovery was creditable to his intelligence in that former state of existence to which it seemed to belong, and in virtue of it he would try to import into his new life the charitable hope and difficult belief in a proportion sum; all and everything that his own Ariadne was to him he would hope and try to think fair ladies heretofore had been to the few faithful lovers who had worshipped their loves as he would.

But at all events there was no one in the world like her to-day. Was she thinking of him and pitying his weary exile? The world was fair because she graced it; he felt as if her absence were putting out the light and glory. He wandered along the solitary promontory. Under the olive trees a reflection of the heavenly tricolor smiled at him. Starry blue anemones and white narcissus mingled with the scanty grass: his fancy gathered the whole enclosure into one vast bouquet, and he sighed because he could not kneel to give it into her hands. Then the path led through orange trees under which no wild flowers grew, and then it came out upon something like an open heath; the ground was bare, but sea flowers grew here and there among the stones. The sun poured down; he felt

the rays fall like dry, welcome rain. It was the year's shortest day, and he thought, "My life's winter is past and gone, and spring was gone before it, and our love can know no autumn of decay; there stretch before us long years of midsummer delight."

The beryl-colored ripples of the tideless sea were washing the little sandy inlet below him. He said to himself, "I wonder from how far out ships see the lighthouse." He tried to keep from himself like a secret the irrepressible thought, "From the point Ferrat I shall see the yacht." The sun shone upon her sails and the light wind bore her smoothly over the twinkling blue. He was ready to upbraid Ariadne for letting the sun shine when he was not there to see it; it seemed as if all the light he saw was a long way off. The yacht's head was turned out to sea. Unreasonable as it was, he felt a chill of disappointment. He was a monster of unreasonableness. Of course she could not help it; he must endure his fate like a man. It was hard, but he would endure it manfully, and he tried to fit to music Hawes' couplet—

> For though the daye be never so long,
> At last the belle ringeth to evensong.

Let it be midsummer all the year round; but as men pray against an imagined danger, he was ready to pray it might not be always noon.

He thought of himself as a state prisoner, with a long term of solitary confinement to serve out. Clearly the only escape from madness and despair was to begin seriously with some earnest thought. He began to think of Ariadne, and as he thought, wild waves of longing drowned his soul again. He stretched out his arms, and she was not there; the flood of longing left him stranded on the bare, stony ground. He felt like a fish stranded by the tide upon a barren shore; the parched earth was bare and desolate; of what use was he or it? "I wish," he murmured, "Ariadne, I wish there were nothing in the world but thy dearness, and whatsoever may be dear to thee, and my soul gasping thirstily towards the infinite ocean of thy dearness, where its gaspings drown themselves, and there is nothing left but thee!" But there was his love left still, and it stretched out covetous arms after the departing yacht. The fish he felt like was that strange vessel landed by the fisherman in the "Arabian Nights." When the seal of the lid was taken off, the imprisoned Djinn rose up like smoke; he stretched himself out, tall, and with expanding arms, like the thoughts with which Arnold now swooped down upon the yacht, where Ariadne stood by her father on the bridge.

As the yacht weighed anchor, Ariadne had taken refuge in the cabin to read at leisure the letter of which she had hardly been able to grasp the words

in her haste to send an answer before it was too late. The yacht had made some way before she appeared on deck again. The boys laughed at her silence. Lord Moidart was deep in maps and consultation with the skipper. Presently he came aft, and asked Ariadne cheerfully if she and the children would like to stay out for a week's cruise and run on to Corsica; the weather was fair, and if they signalled a home-bound boat, the mother would know where they were and not be anxious. Poor Ariadne! She had been planning how, in the course of a long hour's quiet talk with her father, she would gradually prepare him for the momentous news (which, by the way, was no news at all, either to Arnold's mother or Lord Moidart, who had watched complacently the innocent course of their children's first romance), and now she could only feel foolishly unable to say a word, unless her blank looks spoke. Lord Moidart was still young, and in his diplomatic career he had had to read harder riddles than Ariadne's transparent face. He made confession easy to her: how would she like the cruise if they picked up Arnold first? The yacht was put about, and Ariadne whispered, she never quite knew why, "Papa, we had better land at Villa Franca first."

Arnold could not bear the sight of the receding yacht; it was his first trouble, and he set himself to bear it like a man. He turned away from the

dazzling south, and resting his head in the shade of a stunted wild laurel bush, he looked westward, past the castle and old town of Nizza, to the low line of the Antibes; he looked past all these to his English home, where the sun never shone as now, but where Ariadne — was it possible? — Ariadne would one day walk by his side. Do what he would, his thoughts still circled round. He could not dwell on thoughts of her without the upspringing of a wild desire; then he set himself to desire nothing she could not grant, and, however soberly his thoughts began again, ere long they ended with outstretched arms and a wailing cry within. He could bear it no longer, and started up to see the yacht once more, even if it were only as a distant speck, bearing his love away. He looked; was it a too happy dream? The yacht was nearer, the sun glancing on her sails; she was making for the harbor. Could it mean — he dared not guess — what could it mean? No! she was anchoring far out, the wind was against her entering the harbor — was anything amiss? They were lowering a boat. Arnold stood with every limb intent, like Mercury waiting Jove's word to fly; he watched with straining eyes. What sailor could wear white and blue? Ariadne, by heaven! Ariadne is in the boat, and it comes to fetch her lover!

Do not think my hero mad. He paused to think about his dress; a white flannel shirt is none the

worse for water, and the sun and sea only made his yellow hair curl tighter; he did not wish to reach her looking like a gray drowned rat, but somehow it never crossed his mind as possible that he should wait on shore till the boat came nearer. He proceeded very orderly to take off his coat and boots; he folded her letter and put it in his tin fusee case; he slipped the ring on his little finger, and, after dipping his head in the sea, he stuck a sprig of flowering myrtle behind his ear. He waded among pink flowering rocks, and the delicate medusæ swam round him unabashed; then, as the water deepened, he struck out to sea.

The world was bright again; but a new change had come upon his spirit. His love and longing had been too boisterous, his joy had hovered upon the brink of sudden death. As he rested on the cool blue water, and rose and fell with the soothing motion of the gentle swell, he felt at one with the world which was all one path towards her. What were time and distance to make his love grow faint, though she was far off, beyond the end of the infinite ladder of light that glittered dazzlingly between him and the horizon — were not his arms and his courage strong? and with a slow, steady, effortless stroke, he felt himself borne along towards the goal. He was swimming southward, sunward. On either hand, if he could have seen it, the sea was of the deepest blue; but his path lay along the broad,

bright stream, like a transparent silver sunbeam, which reached on to behind the sun in heaven. The sun's rays were strong upon his head; as he rose over the crest of a little wave, its foam splashed refreshingly in his face; the rippling of the water, the warmth overhead, and the still, even motion of his limbs brought a kind of drowsiness with it. The journey seemed long though the way was pleasant, and Ariadne herself would meet him at the end; it was with a sobered joy that he thought of what seemed the far-off meeting. But with the drowsiness his strokes were slackening, and he woke again to more strenuous pursuit. He thought, "My best good will take a life's pursuit; Ariadne will scorn an idle lover;" and he swam faster; he knew he was swimming fast and well, and he thought joyously of the nearing boat.

He heard the splash of the oars, and the sailors humming in chorus "Lou Rossignou che vola." He listened in vain for Ariadne's voice; he saw the boat fast drawing nearer, and she was leaning forward in the bow. He smiled and did not speak; but as they drew quite near, he paused in his stroke, and leaning, as it were, with his elbows on the buoyant water, he took the ring and the sprig of myrtle in his hand, and, as the boat came close, he touched the prow and Ariadne's hand; the ring was on her finger and the sprig of myrtle in her hand before any one else quite saw what passed.

Then, laughing, he climbed into the boat; he said it was glorious weather for a swim; he talked fast and to every one but her.

Just before they reached the yacht, Lord Moidart patted him on the back with a good-humored laugh, the like of which he has often had to encounter since, and pointed out that if he had stayed on shore in his clothes, the boat would have picked him up in little more than another ten or fifteen minutes.

"But I could not wait," said he.

Ariadne was close by, and they looked away from each other, lest any one else should overhear the answer of her eyes.

V.

At Anchor.

As in the rainbow's many-coloured hue,
Here see we watchet deepened with a blue,
There a dark tawny with a purple mixt,
Yellow and flame, with streaks of green betwixt,
A bloody stream into a blushing run,
And ends still with the colour which begun;
Drawing the deeper to a lighter stain,
Bringing the lightest to the deep'st again,
With such rare art each mingleth with his fellow,
The blue with watchet, green and red with yellow.

— WILLIAM BROWNE.

V.

REUBEN was not ill in body, and no visible calamity had befallen him. He was an artist of some promise, and had a picture at the Academy. He was in love with a pretty rich young woman of the gay world, with a heart to spare for the first who could teach it. His dream had been at one stroke to win such fame as should warrant him in whispering, "My fame is yours and you my love." But he had loved too little or too much to betray his secret yet, and he had put a meaning in his painting which she had not read. She had congratulated him on its being well hung. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* He left London that night. It was a minor matter that his picture was not sold, and that he had reasons for preferring the cheapest third-class ticket that would bring him to the Channel's shores. The next morning an even, gray, fine mist fell, or rather hung, in silent, moveless gloom over earth, and sea, and sky. The cliffs were low and sandy, but patches of heather spoke of days when all color was not blotted out of view. Reuben turned mechanically away from the straggling water-

ing-place towards the open coast, and when he had reached the point where the down was highest, above the sandy ruts of the cliff road, he threw himself on the elastic heath-tufts and set himself to meditate on the universal grayness.

The unfortunate never know how fiercely they have clung to their one last hope till the moment when that too has failed. One by one lesser objects of desire elude the grasp, and each disappointment is borne, to the victim's own amaze, with hardly weakened courage; for, without knowing it, each succeeding disappointment only serves to nourish the strong surviving hope for the one bliss that shall make amends for all the rest. And then at last — some put off the day of waking so long that their own last sleep comes before it — but to some at last comes the moment of bewilderment when the life-long desire is frozen by the blast of final deprivation; the last doom of denial is uttered from without, and despair sweeps like a hurricane over every sense; and then, amidst the very bitterness of blank despair, comes a vision of the double death. Even this might have been borne like the rest, if only hope were left — of something, ever so little, anything — but a shadow of the slightest thing, still in front to hope for.

It was so with Reuben now. He had lived the double life of man and artist, and again and again he had failed in both. It is needless to rehearse the

trivial details, the recurring discouragements, which he had defied, thinking, "Yet a few more months, then weeks, then interminable days — and then, and then — she will see, and surely she will understand. I will not tell her that my fate hangs upon her seeing. If my spirit speaks to hers from the canvas, there is no need; and if it does not speak, if she cannot or does not choose to hear, it is not for me to beg for mercy, to force from her kindness words that do not spring from her own desire to speak — to me alone of all men. It may be she will not speak. If so, that will be over, and one may live thereafter as one can. But perhaps, perhaps, perhaps — oh! if she should have that to say, to say to me, which my soul would give life, death and eternity to hear!"

This had been the burden of his dreams, and she had not spoken. He had prayed before, like the great poet in his immortal agony — "And if you leave me, do not leave me last!" "How can she leave me," he muttered, "when she never came?" She had not crossed the threshold of his studio; if she had, alone there, would she have understood? She never understood the passion of longing which prompted his timid suggestion, would she not like to come? She had smiled with uncomprehending courtesy, and he was just in his misery. How could she have known what he never dared to say? He had spent his strength in silencing the jealous

rage which filled him when a happy, thoughtless youth won easily the promise of her presence — was it at a cricket-match, or where? Nay, but he wanted too much himself to be jealous of those who won lesser boons; his wishes had dared to wander boundlessly, and this was the end of his infinite longings. He questioned himself incredulously, was this less than nothingness the end?

He lay upon the heather in the falling mist, stunned, bewildered, understanding at last that he had staked his life upon a single throw, and he had lost. It was like the end of one of those year-long games of chance played by barbarians, East and West, in the far-off past, and like the hero of such tales, he had lost himself and all he had, and the game must go on without him, for he had nothing left to stake. His chance was over, once and for ever. He could not look to win by the help of Time's revenges, for he was no longer able even to play, though the maddest run of luck should lure him. It felt strange to be alive when every hope was dead and every purpose starved and atrophied. "But," he thought, "it is no concern of mine now. Since my soul passed out of my own keeping into hers, it was she, not I, who had the power to dispose of all its future."

The mist was growing lighter over the sea; cloud and horizon began to be distinguishable, and streaks of gray above and below grew transparent, as if

colored lights of red and yellow were shining far away behind them. Level gray moisture still hung upon the land, and all round there was a silence that might be felt. Reuben closed his eyes wearily; he had not slept for several nights. His eyes were hot, and there was a dull throbbing above the brows. His limbs ached; long-continued fatigue and the forcibly postponed consciousness of bodily discomfort were taking their revenge, and for a moment his mental wretchedness seemed forgotten in the sense of utter physical exhaustion and distress. The momentary oblivion was like a breath of chloroform in the midst of pain. The feeling of bodily discomfort was faintly but distinctly pleasurable, and as Reuben gave himself up to it he thought dreamily that this explained the self-torturing passions of asceticism. When the soul is sick to death, bodily pain is the only possible source of relief, the relief that comes from a change of suffering. For a few moments mind and body were almost unconscious together; the pause was more like faintness than sleep; but before his eyes opened again to confront the full visage of his grief, he felt with dim astonishment, and something almost akin to self-reproach, that his overmastering misery did not even now wholly exclude every other mode of consciousness. He felt the shallowness of his misery as an aggravation of its unsounded depths of bitterness.

With the instinct that makes us say "Look!" when we wish for the mind's attention, Reuben opened his eyes to see if there was any escape from the encompassing grayness, any change in the surrounding gloom to warrant this strange feeble impulse towards embracing a lesser pain. The sun was hidden, but its light was struggling intermittently through the clouds. The heavy gray curtain of opaque mist which had seemed to hang between his eyes and the familiar world was not lifted; it only seemed to dissolve into shadowy colors, meaningless and manifold, like those which herald the transformation scene in a Christmas pantomime. Sea and sky had melted again into one; but varied shades of color, in pale mimicry of the rainbow's bands, seemed to divide the continuous upright bank of vapor that veiled or shadowed forth the actual scene. It was too fantastic to be beautiful, and the artist was too sad to take any interest in the vagaries of nature; but the returning memory of despair kept his consciousness awake, and he felt rather than saw opened out before him such a rainbow as might span Styx and Phlegethon when infernal lightnings play upon slow showers of poisoned mud. The indigo band of the horizontal rainbow lay where a belt of weedy sea was overshadowed by the darkest cloud. The shallow waters were turbid from the last night's swell, and there may have been a sandbank behind the reef,

helping to color the dull waves red. The half-lurid light from above lit up the reddish strip of sea, that melted then into pale metallic yellow where a break in the clouds was reflected on the sullen surface; and then the same shaded streaks of gray, blue and red, with green and yellow lights, repeated themselves in the sky above, as in the mirage the scene reflects itself upon the sky, instead of earth and sea being mirrored in smooth waters underneath. The unearthly hues were not without a mysterious grace, but they had no charm for Reuben: he had done with the world of men, and it was an added mockery that nature should have new tricks to play off before his careless and reluctant eyes.

For this was the burden of his wonder now. All was over, and the strange thing is, how little difference it seemed to make. Her life, sunrise and sunset, the work and pleasure of indifferent friends, all this would go on just as before; every material care and difficulty, and the one duty Reuben never thought to question, remained unchanged in prospect. He wished never to touch a brush again; but it was not painting to color canvases for hire, and how else could he earn the money he must have to keep his lame young brother in the country home, whence he wrote, only yesterday, of his happiness and mending health? And if Reuben painted for pay, how could he do less than his best work, and

who would know the difference when none of the accustomed skill had left his fingers, only the light of hope his heart? And he had been wont to call it simony if men sold work done by skilled hands while the heart and thoughts were far away!

A light brown rain-cloud drifted like a waterspout athwart the motionless gray background. Was he to live and walk a soulless ghost among the living, a moving shadow of unknown pain? Nothing had been real in his life but the loss of it; all the rest was vain imagination, that had passed current with his fellows for reality, while he himself could make-believe its truth; and now he must still walk among the living, veiling the grim forms of death and pain, who lodged devouringly in the broad palaces his imagination had reared for hope and love. Nothing was changed outside. The moments were long, and again and again he looked upon the gray mist; he felt its clammy touch as he watched the pale colors in their shadowy dance, varying yet the same, ever pale and shadowy and weird. So it was, and so it would be through such years as the prisoner for life only dares to think of when they end. The life-sentenced convict may hope for death, or escape, or a ticket of leave; but Reuben could not even hope for death, which would leave his little brother to the cold charity of the busy world.

There was a buoy some way out in the Channel, the only token of a sharp sunken rock. As it rose

and sank with the ground swell, Reuben's sympathies went out towards it as a living thing. It clings to its anchorage with that tenacity that made men choose the anchor for the sign of hope; it clings blindly with brute fidelity to its forced anchorage, but it has nothing to fear or hope from storm or sunshine: life and death are for the craft that thread the Channel beyond. And then his mind wandered back to the despised canvas. Did she know that every line and every tint was born directly of her influence, was inspired by her gracious smile, or prompted by her grave opinion? It was her work, and she did not own it; it was the monument of his love, the only relic left him of his hopeful life in sight of her; and the only relic of her left to him was a relic, not of her, only of what she had declined to receive at his hands. The intensest consciousness does not soliloquize in words; if he had been forced to seek them, they would have seemed few and empty. It is hard, ineffably hard! It seems to be true. What then? It cannot be true. It *is* true. Oh me! and it is hard!

And then the sense of dreary anchorage upon a hidden duty faded, and he felt like a drowning man, clutching at he knew not what as strong waves sucked him back, bruised and battered, to foreseen destruction; and then it was not the boat's gunwale, nor the slippery rock, or yielding herbage that he was grasping in the hard death struggle,

but a soft, firm hand, warm and gentle to the touch, and to be saved by that was a pleasure, even if the salvation had been death. But then — it was hardly a dream, though the hand felt very like hers as he had said "Good-by" only the afternoon before, — then he seemed to feel those soft sweet fingers firmly and gently unloosening the clutch by which he clung to them and life. What right had he to cling to her? Yet he clung, and with gentle irresistible touch she unclasped his clinging fingers; and as in a dream one falls through space, waking prostrate with a palpitating heart, so Reuben wondered, was it all a dream, as his eyes opened again upon the mist, and he loosed the convulsive grasp which crushed and half uprooted the wiry heather shoots.

There is a strange incredulity in some sick men when at last the skilled judgment pronounces that their days are numbered. Very few can grasp, while they still live, and suffer no more — it may be less — than yesterday, that a day is coming, is near, when they, their living selves, will be numbered with the painless dead. They come back again and again to the thought with a sacred surprise, how should so strange a tale be true? So Reuben again and again faced his blank surprise; his world had turned to a shadow of dark, cold emptiness. How could he live? And yet not a visible reason for his life and effort had been withdrawn from the world

of his fellows' sight and feeling. His mind was dazed, his limbs paralyzed; every sense but that of sight seemed closed, and what he saw was only like a shadow of what he felt. It crossed his mind like a recollection from some former state of existence, that a clear horizon lay behind the mist, that sometimes the sun shone upon clear outlines of the rock where rolling waves might break in spray; and so he knew — by an effort he recalled to memory the knowledge — that the world had not ceased to live and love, to labor, suffer and aspire, because he was cut off from living partnership in its cares and hopes.

Hours had passed, and the mist was falling still. The spirit of his waking dreams had changed. The many-colored world, looming dimly through the veil of universal grayness, seemed to float in space, like a child's toy balloon, but he and it were held together as if the visionary earth and sea were anchored on his aching heart, as if the iron that entered into his soul was the solid, crushing immovable shadow of the hope that was gone from him.

He had no thought of moving; distant sounds fell without meaning on his ears, till all at once he was startled by the shriek of a railway whistle, that began strangely so as to accompany and prolong a sea-gull's cry. The sound jarred upon his quivering frame, and with an ostrich-like instinct

he hid his face, lying with upstretched arms upon the sandy slope. He sought to be alone with his grief, to gather all his strength together, if so be that he might bear its weight. And as if in answer to his desire, a space of silence was granted him, a respite from the sights and sounds of the outer world. He was alone with his grief; he seemed to be lying in a world apart, like one in bodily pain, whose only striving is to endure; and then all at once a rush of feeling, too massive to waste itself in the unspoken words of conscious thought, swept over his struggling will. Endurance was swallowed up in pain; he moaned aloud. He had tasted the bitterness of death; a death-like stillness fell upon soul and body. A low moan coming from far off seemed like the echo of his own lost utterance. But his sorrow would henceforth keep silence, and the melancholy wailing of the wind upon the telegraph wires grew louder and more frequent as cold gusts began to gather the mist into watery clouds.

Reuben was wet through, stiff, and weary to the point which makes change of place a luxurious change of uneasiness. He rose to his feet and stretched the cramped, chill limbs, and ran cold fingers through his salt wet hair. He made an effort to awake. It could not all be a bad dream, but a man should rouse himself to know the worst. What *was* the worst? His thought was, "I would sell my soul to be free to cut my throat to-night!

The devil take it! Why isn't there even a devil to take body and soul at a gift, when one asks nothing better than to be rid of both, to escape the curse of life's long emptiness?" He was not an irreverent youth, nor much given to swearing as a rule, and the unwonted invocation helped to rouse him. He smiled rather grimly and said to himself, "Even if there were a devil to go to, it wouldn't be much use now." And then, standing upright in the mist, he looked at the mock rainbow over the sandbanks, and a vague temptation possessed him. There was no hope, no outlook, no heaven of hope in front, no way of salvation for soul or body. Was it possible that there might be a pleasant way of sinning? "I wish ——" he began, and then he laughed aloud and pulled himself together more wakefully, and tried to put some sane merriment in his laugh. "I am glad I *don't* wish for anything, if I can wish for nothing better than that there was a devil for me to go to!"

And so he went back to the station and caught the Parliamentary train to town; and his landlady hoped he had had a pleasant journey and would not fail to change his socks.

VII.

Men Our Brothers.

And here, as lamps across the bridge turn pale
In London's smokeless resurrection light,
Dark breaks to dawn. —D. G. Rossetti.

VI.

I NOTICE that nothing tells a truer tale about the set of a person's prejudices or preferences than the thing which they put first in a comparison. If a man says his lady love is like the moon, if I were she I shouldn't be best pleased, for it means he cares more about star-gazing than love. If a man says the murmur of an excited crowd is like the roaring of the sea, he may be able to tell you what the wild waves say, but he neither knows nor cares much about the feeling of a mass of men stirred by one voice and passion. And so it is proved that I don't stand in the first rank among the votaries of nature when I confess that the sort of association that gives a pleasant feeling to a walk along the cliff in the October gales is that with the stream of traffic along the narrow pavement of a city street at noon, with the tide of brown or blackish human specks that pour over Blackfriars Bridge at nine in the morning, or the jostling torrent streaming through the doors when Exeter Hall is going to be packed from roof to ceiling with eager half-taught men in "demonstration" of some half-learnt lesson of po-

litical wisdom or justice. If I dash into the war of words myself, and turn for a moment the argument the way I wish, I do not say to myself, "Such as this was the pleasure I felt when, bathing with our host, I learnt to dive through the breakers, drift with the back-draught to the right moment, and then dive again and swim with the current towards the chosen landing." But I have felt instead among the London crowd, when the excitement of the passing contest was over, as if the charm of this face-to-face wrestling with the stream of kindred independent passions was to me something like that other pleasure felt by the skilled swimmer in the dangerous element he had learned to master.

But in general I think the things that interest me are interesting in themselves without the help of metaphor. I do not care so much about the variations in an individual lot as for the ever-growing intricacy of the relations between each set of lives and a thousand other sets. I would rather be dead, buried and forgotten than have to live in sight of collisions and confusions one could do nothing to reconcile or harmonize. I can conceive no more fascinating ambition, no more entrancing aim, than that of unravelling the tangled threads of popular desire, and choosing for the unconscious many the one path along which all may move straight towards the sought content.

You say it isn't easy? If it were easy, where

would the amusement be? If it were impossible, I for one should despair of finding an interest in life. If you go in for practical politics, you deliberately make it your business to discover and divine, in order to defeat, the involuntary opposition offered by short-sighted interests to a systematic advocacy of the universal best. Whether one succeeds or fails, the contest is worth trying, and at least ennui is impossible while it lasts.

Of course my political friends call me a *doctrinaire* prig when I want to stick inconveniently close to general principles, or they are getting indefensibly warm about a temporary expedient; and a reputation for priggishness is rather fatal to one's chance of becoming an accepted leader. But I would rather be free to want things done my own way than get more done by less logical demands. Hardly any of the men who have ruled their fellows have the supreme qualification of seeing their way straight to an absolutely ideal end. They grow impassioned and contend successfully over the establishment of a few *axiomata media*, which, to my mind, have neither the dignity of a first principle nor the urgency of a concrete fact. The "practical" politician struggles towards a favorite partial reform as I would have men strive for the very millennium; the sentimentalist cares for the wrongs and sufferings of an injured few as I would have men care about the mere possibility of iniquitous pain; professional re-

formers, demagogues and agitators lose themselves, and are content to lose themselves, in working the machinery towards a near result, which is only of value to me as a means or a symbol of approach to some change of universal scope. The means are good and welcome, but they are all alike mere means, and I care no more for the means I have to use myself than for those which prove effective in another hand. In fact, I think I care less: one's own range of action is so narrow, and one sees all round one's own blunders; but if somebody else, from whom one does not expect infallibility at starting, does of his own accord, even in part, what we could only earn our own self-respect by doing completely and triumphantly, it seems so much clear, unexpected gain.

And then if, instead of being unforeseen, the pleasure has been carefully prepared by our own hands, if we have knowingly helped our neighbor towards the wisdom with which he delights us now, there is a double or triple satisfaction left for the mind to ruminate upon. We have planted a tree which will bear fruit, though our own efforts were barren always; and besides the fruit for this generation, seedlings and suckers will increase and multiply, so that in them the parent stock may remain green forever. I have the keenest sense of the usefulness of men who are not much missed when they die, because their power has been spent in rearing inher-

itors of their own work and purpose. I think the Buddhists say, "Blessed is he who has shown the way," *i.e.*, who has shown it to others, whether he travelled far along it himself or no.

Entanglement in exacting practical affairs is not conducive to poetical meditation, even at the most witching hour of night. But on one particular occasion I had a companion, an intelligent fellow, but with something of the poetic temperament, and a melancholy twist, that, if he had been an artist instead of a plasterer, would have inspired meditations to the full as dismal as those of our friend "Reuben." We had our way to make through London pretty nearly from north-east to south-west, and his running comments upon all we saw helped to fix the common sights in my memory. We had been at a local Trade Union meeting somewhere between Whitechapel and Stepney, and when we left, nearer one than twelve, it appeared that my friend had told his wife not to expect him home that night, as he would be kept late and could stop with a chum in the neighborhood of the meeting. This friend's wife turned out to be ill, and as Waters had to be at work in Lambeth by six, he agreed to halt in my chambers for the two or three hours' interval.

I was in good spirits after an interesting discussion of what seemed to me an important and promising idea. Waters was indignant and depressed

because the idea was met by opposition of a narrow and apparently selfish kind. The scheme was for a so-called "Federalization" of the various trade societies throughout the country, a fusion of interests between the men of different trades, like the amalgamation already carried out in many important trades of independent local unions. Theoretically it seemed a logical, and indeed inevitable, development of the fundamental principles of trade unionism; it seemed as if the laborer could only be really strong through association when all the different industries were pledged to support and reinforce each other in all reasonable demands, and to restrain unreasonable demands by the check of a responsible public opinion.

Just as it has been found that the men in one town or one workshop will threaten a strike upon trivial personal grounds which the trade society as a body disallows, so it is to be expected that the excited passions of a large and united body of men may sometimes need to be overruled by the sober counsels of disinterested persons of their own class; that sailors might preach forbearance to weavers, and weavers patience and moderation to masons. In large towns the "Trade Council" aims at doing locally what a federal union of the trades would do for all England, and in my ignorance I thought the scheme had only to be proposed to meet with a hearty welcome, notably from the existing trade

councils, whose dignity, I argued, must be increased by their acting as intermediaries between the small and large assemblies representing all the trades. But there are ambitions of all degrees of narrowness, and the men who are accustomed to be of chief consequence on the trade council of a large town do not care to sink their importance by taking a subordinate part in a really national scheme; and there was some justification even for the doubts of honest and unselfish practical men, who saw that some of the most talkative promoters of the new scheme were men who had not a solid reputation for industry and good faith in their own trade or neighborhood. It was a repetition in small of the old experience that visionaries and charlatans are more ready to take up with even true new lights than the sober mass of practical men.

Waters was one of the exceptional men who see the broadest questions in a fair light without losing their grasp of the material details; and just because he knew the scheme to be practical and possible, he was the more discouraged by finding it meet with but flimsy support and substantial opposition. I said, by way of encouragement, it was not so far from the present standpoint to the realization of our wishes here, as it was from the old conspiracy laws to the present state of things: with time and patience we should arrive, as our predecessors had done.

He said, "Ay; and at the same cost. Did you ever think how many of the best men of two or three generations felt their hearts breaking, day by day, because of just such slowness in the progress towards right?"

I tried again, with my own favorite topic of consolation: "It is pleasant anyway to see that there *is* a possible solution of our difficulties; that the only thing needed is to bring the practical leaders over to see the solution as their own, — there are no insuperable obstacles."

He said, stopping as he spoke, and taking hold of the lamp-post by way of a *που στω* for his eloquence, "I beg your pardon, Mr. James; but if you will allow me to say so, you, and gentlemen like you, remind me very much of the poet Wordsworth."

I tried to intimate that this was an undeserved compliment, but he proceeded to explain that it was intended otherwise.

"I had never read much of Wordsworth," he continued, "till after something John Mill said to me once, much the same as what I read afterwards in his autobiography. I believed in Mill in a way one seldom believes in any one, least of all in gentlemen and philosophers; and I bought a complete edition of Wordsworth, and spent one winter's evenings in reading his poems well through. And the conclusion I came to was, that he might be

very good reading for ladies and gentlemen who had never felt anything like the French Revolution themselves. Much of it was fine poetry for everybody; but what Mill praised in it was only good morality for born aristocrats, who wanted to learn a little humanity, but were never likely to carry their learning too far. I never liked Shelley so well as when he saw through Peter Bell the Second and his

> Dim recollections
> Of pedlars tramping on their rounds;
> Milk pans and pails, and odd collections
> Of saws and proverbs, and reflections
> Old parsons make in burying-grounds.

'Burns, Shelley, were with us,' as Browning says, but Wordsworth — I should have liked to tell him to his solemn face that shepherds, pedlars, mad women, and all, were good for something more than figures in a landscape for him to feel wise and good in looking at.

"The landscape *I* see is the other way. I was at Manchester for a Trades Congress once, and went up to the Cumberland lakes for the Saturday to Monday after. All Sunday I roamed upon the bare hills without meeting a living soul, and I grew savage to think of this glorious nature being enjoyed alone by a poet who cared no more for his fellowmen than for the picturesque stones and daffodils; while T——, the engineer, and P——, the brassfounder,

and V——, whom you knew in Westminster, and I and thousands more, who could love the stones and flowers as well as Wordsworth, and our brethren as our very selves, we by a fluke see these hills once in a lifetime, if then, and then perhaps not without grudging the few shillings that we think should have gone elsewhere than on two or three days' pleasuring. Well, if you'll forgive me for saying so, when swells like you come among us and try to understand what we want, and do your best to help us, we can't help feeling now and then that what is life and death to us is after all only a moral kind of play to you. Like Wordsworth and his peasants, you make a kind of picture to yourselves of the life of the people, only you do it in scientific prose, instead of in poetry, that I can enjoy well enough when I forget the moral. Your pictures and his may be true enough — that isn't my quarrel; but we want to live our own lives, not to sit for our pictures to be hung up in statesmen's libraries. You say, 'Let's have a correct likeness first, and then we shall know where we are and be able to help.' But we *feel* all that you want to draw and more than you can see towards it, and the people won't stand still when they are hungry or in hot anger to let you find out things about them that they know by heart themselves already, and they aren't grateful to those who ask them. And then I begin to think no one from outside *can* help us — no one who doesn't feel heart

and soul with us, as no one can feel who has never had the chance of doing more than sympathize; and that we must wait for one of ourselves with brains to understand and power to act even while he feels. — But this is uncivil, ungrateful talk, for which I ask your pardon, sir. I daresay you'll understand enough of how we feel to excuse my saying what comes uppermost."

I frankly owned that Waters' instinct was just enough. As to Wordsworth, it may be part of my Philistinism, but I don't above half like him, and wasn't sorry to be furnished with a reason why. But as I understood something of my friend's grounds for irritation, I trusted that he might see enough of the other side to excuse my reluctance to surrender the intellectual freedom with which one starts, by abandoning one's self altogether to the current of sympathetic anger. When one has the good luck not to be the victim of a bad custom in the boot trade, does it make one a more useful citizen to feel as if the abolition of that custom was the most urgent duty laid on men? For a shoemaker the evil has its natural place and proportion in life, but if we — I said to him — "If we are to succeed in helping you at all, I think it must be chiefly at first by clearing away the mechanical difficulties in the way of your helping yourselves. The social machinery hinders you now, we ought to tinker at it till we make it help instead; and that is in itself

such a troublesome job that I am not sure whether you need grudge us the unsubstantial pay of a little harmless self-satisfaction when for a moment we think we see the track clear for a few yards in the jungle ahead, though we have still to get the troops and baggage wagons over the ground."

We had been standing still during this discussion, and a policeman had stopped a few yards off to look at us. Waters jerked his shoulder towards the representative of the law, and said, "No. 91 thinks we are a suspicious-looking pair, and I suppose you would like me to be thankful that nevertheless we two meet as friends, with no worse aim than that of setting the world to rights." I assented, and felt mightily inclined to pass my arm through his as we walked on and dropped into broken chat on less exciting themes, but I did not dare. The motion was natural, for we had reached the point of friendly freedom at which home truths can be exchanged; and it is possible he would have felt this as I did, and not have resented the familiarity at the moment. But then we should meet again, he in the company of his daily associates, and I among mine; and I dreaded the involuntary, almost inevitable, jar to so susceptible a nature when he imagined that such or such a stately swell, who might take my arm condescendingly in St. James' Street, would stare at the notion of my taking his in Cur-

tain Road. So we walked on side by side, merely keeping step together.

Presently, to prevent the silence lasting so long as to make it awkward to speak again, I said the interminableness of London streets was a thing I never quite got used to. He agreed, and linked his assent on to our former subject by the remark that it was easier to interest one's self in statistics about so many thousand persons, than in their actual bodily presence as symbolized by so many miles of dwelling and sleeping rooms. "Cities," he went on, "have a solitude of their own, and I shouldn't quarrel with a poet who dwelt upon the crowded life as a sort of background, an inanimate scenery in front of which the little group of actors we see and know play out their part. When men are crowded together in great numbers, we *cannot* see them all at once as men; at least, the only human element that can be brought before us vividly is the common beginning, end and middle of their lives as shown in the figures, that always seem so inhumanly dry, about births, deaths and marriages. And yet it is just as real and moving a fate that you and I or any other mother's son should spend our days among this forest of hearths and doorways, as that another branch of our same race should spend the years in company with dumb beasts, rarely or never seeing an unknown human face. In a single stroll we pass a thousand living men; we don't so

much as note their features; and yet each one has a life of his own in which the rest have no place save as an unnoticed background. Imagine the still mountains compact of a million heaped-up, eager, conscious lives, and yet as still as the waste lying before us now."

He stopped and pointed. We had reached a kind of *carrefour;* a wide road with a tramway ended where it was crossed at an oblique angle by another narrower but still busy thoroughfare; opposite the tramway two converging squalid streets met at this centre, and at right angles to it a dark, straight street, once of solemn, middle-class respectability, opened with a protest against the lurid glare of the gas-lamps and gin-palaces which stood sentinel at every other corner. I looked all around; it was not the first time by many I had passed through such scenes, but then I had not been forced to halt and note their features by a comrade to whom no scene could be expressionless. I am no hand at descriptions, and when I compare my recollections of that night with the other street scenes I have tried to notice since, I know that I only saw by the light of his stronger feeling.

The air of London streets by night is almost always brown, the color that is fog by daylight; this darkness fills the vistas down opening streets, it hangs between the houses, and stretches like a level sea between the roofs and lowest clouds; but

in this region it is seldom one so much as sees the clouds that hide the starlight; one sees so little through the thick brown air that it serves itself for a cloud — veiling no gods, however. Now and then a red window opens through the darkness, like the flash in mid-air from a lighthouse when storms hide the solid building. One must know beforehand what is there to guess that the light pours from the unveiled window of some seventh story in a warehouse, where night is being turned into day over an urgent job; or it may be merely the illuminated face of a church clock, with the tower, and the hands and figures blotted out alike, or the shell of an advertising magic lantern, with black letters in praise of somebody's boots or hats, ready to break out in relief against the light.

But everywhere upon the dull brown pervading mist there rests the reflection of a lurid glare from the dim gas-lamps, and the light that leaks through shop-fronts and the closed shutters or ragged blinds, behind which women sew, and some — thank God! — *some* households gather in homely happiness for the evening's rest. And as the streets darken, when the last shops are closed, and the ragged children have almost disappeared up mysterious courts and archways, when the wheel traffic is ending, and only a few rapid, silent passengers are scattered on the footway, it seems as if the dim light by which all the children of misery grope

their way to an early death was turned inwards; the streets are darker, but the glow upon the murk air only seems the deeper red, as if, like glow-worms in the dark, each smoking lamp or flaring farthing candle flickered with a living light, casting upon the sombre streets the sad shadow of the slow agony and dumb strivings of stupid, drunken, caged humanity.

As darkness that may be felt, the silence falls like lead, more heart-breaking than the rarer shouts from a brawling party still unwilling to seek its comfortless lair within. The strange half light seemed to mask the sordid familiarity of the street prospect, the subdued passion in my companion's voice added to the sense of awe; it was like a dream, in which some new poet, wise and merciful and stern, led the way through a real Inferno, where sins and judgments walked hand in hand, and the children shared their fathers' load. The air seemed to grow hotter and heavier; the red darkness reminded me of the glare round the horizon from the furnaces at night in the mid-land Black Country, but the sultriness, I thought, could come from no honest fire of coals. I heard the tramp of heavy measured steps upon the pave-ment, and something like a fear startled me for a moment. If this was hell, who but I could be the criminal, the stranger keeping the laws of another land?

Waters too seemed oppressed. He had been standing bareheaded, and now turned his face upwards, and as he said "Thunder," I felt large drops of rain fall one by one. We started on our way again, walking briskly, but we had still far to go, and as we reached London Wall, the slowly gathering storm broke over us. As if at the signal of a clap of thunder, the clouds came down in torrents, and my friend had a day's work to do without changing his clothes. We turned for shelter into the first wide doorway, where another pair of wayfarers had taken refuge before us. They did not notice us, but I looked under cover of my umbrella, and I cannot forget the two faces that I saw. A tall young soldier, very young, with a small oval face, brown hair, and just good, honest, boyish features, but he was looking at the girl who held his arm with an expression I had no words to represent. I can only describe it now to those who have seen Salvini in Othello. If you have seen his

> Come, Desdemona, I have but an hour
> Of love,

you have seen the look with which this transfigured ploughboy looked at his sweetheart's face. And she? Some years his senior, and looking maybe older than her age, the girl's thin, plain face had a hard, eager look, her eyes moved restlessly, and her laugh sounded strained. They had been at

some music-hall together, and were comparing the amusement of this and other evenings. The faces interested me, and I fancied I knew the boy's regiment, but I did not care to hear the talk. Presently, however, the girl's voice seemed to be raised; she was only asking, "Did you ever go to the Oxford?" and then, in a hurried, uneasy tone, like the scared restlessness of her eyes, she added, "I went once with a cousin." It was still the first act, and Othello only smiled beatifically. The rain still fell, we affected to turn our backs upon the couple and their voices sank; presently Waters burst out, "I can't stand this!" and strode off furiously through the rain. He had keen ears, and when I overtook him he said he could not bear to hear the woman lying; she was asking the lad for money and then pretending she did not like to take it; he raged inwardly; the divine dreaming of the youth was nothing to him, nothing to set against our instinct that his bliss would be a shortlived dream; but the end of his indignation was charitable in a way. He cursed the girl and her whole tribe, and yet he turned angrily to me: "She may be doing no harm beyond just cheating the boy out of his few spare shillings; she may work honestly for a starving pittance, and take those few shillings home as dutifully as any other earnings!"

We hurried on through the blinding storm; the rain came down like slanting sheets of water, and

then as it beat upon the pavement, the drops rebounded and rose like a low mist along the street and the dark glittering pavement; and then as the drops grew smaller the patter sank into a hiss as if the earth itself were hot, and the fierce showers were turned to steam as they touched the burning crust. The air was heavy; there was no coolness in the wind that now and then swept along the ground whirling together the low mist and steaming spray, which by some trick of sense looked white as it drifted through the lurid, Malebolgian night.

We were near the Temple, and after the manner of thunder-showers the rain was ceasing as we reached cover. It was three o'clock; we were both wet through, and I had no fire to dry Waters' clothes; but I offered him a bath, while I boiled some water over the gas for coffee, and tossed him a dry suit with the hope he wasn't too much of an aristocrat to wear another man's clothes when his own were drenched. He laughed pleasantly and submitted, and in a slightly worn shooting suit of mine looked more of a gentleman than in his own Sunday clothes. He had taste enough to see, and too little vanity to be vexed at this, and it was in a pleasant tone of equality that he laughed at the impossibility of men being really equal, while they couldn't all afford to employ the same tailors. This launched us in fresh discussion as to whether there

was really anything in the finest fruits of social civilization which might not, if we all pleased, be made cheaply accessible to every one, and whether, further, this same every one could and would be found able to enjoy the accessible good. A couple of hours passed wakefully over coffee, cigars, and this inexhaustible theme.

Then it was time for him to start, and as I couldn't, for very shame, go to sleep when my friend's day's work began, I decided to walk with him across the river to Waterloo, and run down by the 5.40 train to breakfast with the secretary of a new branch of the Agricultural Laborers' Union. He had wanted me to come later in the day to a projected meeting, but other engagements forbade, and I was glad of the chance to see him all the same, and get him to take up the two or three suggestions I should have liked to make to his members myself. I should thus be back in town by twelve, when a case I was engaged in threatened to come on, and also — right or wrong, I must confess this weighed with me a little — Waters would not be disturbed in his plastering by any scorn for gentlemanly idleness. I ought not, however, to have thought of such a chance, for the radical refinement of his nature proved itself by the dropping of all half-bred, jealous susceptibilities the moment he became my guest.

We were good friends before, but the night's

intercourse left our friendship more confiding; for this reason I am glad it should be remembered, and remembered, if my friends will be so kind, in association with the morning, not the midnight sky.

At five o'clock we sallied forth again, just as the first cold glimmer of daylight began to put out the street lamps. We walked by the riverside, but the reflection of the curving rows of light in the water had lost its brilliancy, and as yet the sky was all dark, unbroken gray, the smooth dull gray which is the surest herald of a hot sun at noon. It was too early for my train, so we walked together as far as Westminster.

There had been a long sitting, and Pat O'Reilly, who lives over the water, hailed me hilariously from a cab as he was rattling home across the bridge. I said to Waters, "So we are not the only ones who have been making a night of it."

It is one of his eccentricities to despise parliamentary government, and he scowled (I wasn't in the House then), "Perhaps we are the only ones who haven't been doing mischief the while."

After all he is less accustomed to do without his night's rest than I am, and he was suffering from the re-action after an unwonted strain. We stopped in the middle of Westminster Bridge, and he gave a troubled sigh.

"'Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor till the evening.' I've nothing to say against

that, and it is very difficult to know, when we are grumbling against our lot, whether we are wanting to shirk the common, wholesome discipline of labor, or whether we merely want to divide the load more fairly; whether we are wanting others to work with us of their own accord, or whether we want, in malice or charity, to make them work by force, since they won't choose for themselves what they tell us is the noblest calling. And if I, who have tried to see things fairly, and have nothing in particular to complain of myself — (we've got the nine hours, and I take forty shillings a week pretty well all the year round) — if I can't help feeling this sort of angry doubt sometimes, can you wonder that there is the anger always without the doubt among the hundreds of thousands who sometimes work long hours for low pay, and sometimes walk the streets for no pay at all, who want more money than they can earn for pleasures that are, after all, no worse and far less costly than those rich scamps enjoy without having to earn the chance, and who would like best of all to be as idly extravagant as their idlest 'betters'? It's a tangled job altogether, and though I don't suppose we should mend it by making a clean sweep, unless we all grew wiser first, one feels sometimes as if it would be a relief just to clear the ground of everything that is, so that you and I at least might have no share of responsibility in so much that's wrong."

The good fellow delivered himself of this charitably subversive sentence in a slow, meditative way, that was not without its humorous aspect. We leant against the parapet of the bridge and looked up and down the full stream. Towards the east the gray mist seemed to be sinking slowly downwards, the clouds were vanishing into a light haze overhead and thickening fog below. The dome and cupola of the cathedral just showed above the mist, and something like the ghost of a pale twilight illuminated the shadowy apparition. And upon the river below, where the brown fog was thickest, suddenly there shone out sparkles, red and bright like the rising sun, which we did not see.

Waters was easily turned from the contemplation of his wrongs. "I always wonder," he said, "why the ripples see the sun before we do."

I am generally divided between contempt for the narrowness of these men when they rail at the few for grievances which they themselves could redress with a strong hand if they pleased, and admiration for the magnanimity with which they tolerate their weak oppressors. The fortunes of the world turn upon the magnanimity of its conquerors. I asked Waters if he had read Machiavelli — he reads Italian, and he is an admirer of Leopardi — and when he said no, I quoted the lines —

> Et è e sempre fù e sempre fia,
> Che 'l bene succeda al male, il male al ben,
> E l' un sempre cagion dell' altro sia.

"They are the key to the stationary revolutions of the past; if the selfish many merely divide the spoils of the selfish few, it has all to begin over again, and will end no better than before. Say the victory is in your hands now; you are the strongest; your rightful dues have been denied; you have your brother by the throat; he is in your power. Suppose he says, like an ancient debtor, 'Have patience with me and I will pay thee all'?"

Waters gave a low whistle. "That's one way of putting it. You aristocrats are too clever by half. 'Have patience with me and I will pay thee all!' So *we* are the unmerciful creditors!" And he laughed again with frank amusement.

There was a coffee-stall at the corner of the Bridge, where our ways parted. A crossing-sweeper, got up *à la Turque*, whom I had always taken to be a sham, was having his breakfast there. I answered, "Nay, the world's future turns upon your showing mercy. Have patience with us and, Inshallah! we will pay you all!"

We shook hands and parted; but I turned back once more to say, "If you have patience, and we do not pay, make a clean sweep then."

VIII.

Looking in the Glass.

Nondum amabam et amare amabam : quærebam quod amarem, amans amare, et oderam securitatem, et viam sine muscipulis.

— S. Augustine.

VII.

I AM not going to trace "the epitaph of glory fled," but of a mistake that stopped so long to look in the glass that it never got itself fairly made. I always feel sorry for the noxious plants, fungi, affections, reptiles, and ambitions that humanity sends half grown to Hades. Poor Hades, too, thus populated like a new Van Diemen's Land! But to the point.

It has done nothing but rain for the last week; yesterday twelvemonths was gloriously fine. I went, as was my custom in those days, to watch the setting sun and the rising tide from the dangerous height of the Camel's Back, otherwise known as the Slab, a miniature rocky peninsula, so called from its peculiar shape and the character of its western surface — a sheer reach of unbroken rock, rising some eighty feet from an inaccessible shingle beach. The strata have been half inverted and then stayed, so that the action of rain and land streams cleaves the grain of the rock in an almost vertical line. This curious cliff stretches out into the Atlantic at right angles to the shore; its eastern side is steep but jagged;

the top is an horizontal *arête*, a faint sheep-track taking up all the width, and even this is interrupted by one pinnacle — the hump of the camel — round which you must scramble to reach the end, where showers of snowy foam dash up from the rocks below. In windy weather this pathway was not practicable at all. The tale was told of a coast-guardman who was blown off it into the sea, as he was trying to carry the rocket apparatus to the end in reach of a sinking smack with three men holding on to the rigging. Once or twice, without any assignable cause, my head failed me at the passage, and I turned back. Ordinarily I went on to a spot about two yards from the end of the point, where the rock had begun to break up into spray-worn fragments, and the escarpment was a shade less steep. Here, on a slope like a not too gothic gable, are two ledges, just wide enough to serve, one as seat, and the other as footstool, to any lover of uninhabited nature. The real charm of the seashore is in its lifelessness.

On the afternoon I speak of, I had been sitting some two hours divided between Beranger's songs and the sense of perilous ease attendant on perfect physical comfort in a situation where the nerves are not quite at rest. The whole of the narrow cove below me, or rather behind — for deep water was running at my feet, and I had to look backwards to realize the height of the straight, foreshortened

precipice, down which the eye fell easily — the rugged inlet that had taken lives, bad and indifferent, seemed filled up to the overhanging turf at top with a rosy mist. The sky had been too cloudless for much display of coloring, but the crimson afterglow was deep and oppressive. It was one of those nights when the brassy red of the heavens' concave seems impending to crush the beholder; it draws nearer and nearer, and then — I for one had rather die under its ever-nearing weight — then the glorious blood of gods, the awful spiritual life, curdles and pales; black cinders and ashy emptiness mock the sight, and a chill of disappointment and self-contempt ends the diurnal tragedy.

So it was once more, and then an afterpiece of moony resignation; the icy horrors of another sunrise have frightened back to us the softest breezes of noon, a less arrogant luminary rewards our fortitude, and a purer light streams over sea and sky; but the earth is gray till morning — pale gray with sharp black shadows.

But the last ray of sunlight had not quite left the sky I was watching shiveringly; the plash of the waves deadens every other sound, and I did not hear a footstep on the path behind me. I started and nearly slipped — where shall I find another so easy descent to the ghostly groves of Avernus? — when a light rug was thrown softly on my shoulders from above. I looked up, and saw dimly the face of a

man some five-and-thirty, whose features struck me as familiar — I was going to say pleasing. I, at any rate, liked the ox-like melancholy of his dark brown eyes, and the gentleness, which one is almost obliged to call sweetness, of his smile, candid like that of a German professor. He smiled while apologizing for the abruptness with which he had executed Mrs. Latham Brown's commission, and dilating on her anxiety lest the sudden chill should affect my chest, then supposed to be delicate. I gravely thanked him for having removed the only difficulty in the way of my passing the night where I was, and then he continued to talk.

He (I soon recognized Mr. Herbert L——) had arrived unexpectedly on a visit to his cousins; this was the beginning — of our acquaintance, I mean. Let me make haste on to the end — the end, because of course it is a chance whether we meet again after he has traced most rivers in Asia and Africa to their very uninteresting sources. In the course of the next month we met constantly, as people do in the country, and as constantly fell into the inconclusive, desultory converse touching nature, art, and their compound humanity, natural to people not old or illustrious enough to have lost the trick of opinionatedness. He had a knack of turning up at all my favorite haunts, and did so with such a fatality, that I had a momentary and absurd feeling of injury at his not having discovered my chief favorite of all,

where I went before breakfast the morning of the day we left Westream.

The approach was through the abbey grounds, an unoccupied pleasure seat much favored by tourists. Avoiding the house, one passed into a rough shrubbery path winding downwards on the left hand, and on the right shortly ending in a rock-hewn staircase. This I followed through a natural fissure enlarged by art, and emerged on a belfry-like ledge, just broad enough to give standing room for two, or to let the solitary visitor lie at length, and, leaning on his elbows, look over the edge and watch the pebbles drop sheer into the blue water. I was near the top of a precipitous sandstone cliff, on the face of which sea-ferns and choice flowers defied the collector; immediately below was a deep inlet of clear water washing into quaint, inaccessible caverns; in front an overhanging rock threatening my loop-hole from above, while the mossy twisted roots and stem of a stunted oak made a pillow for arm and head. Hereon I leant, losing count of time as the dazzling sun, the cool glitter of the early hour, the startled breaths of a southern wind, the gulls swooping and sailing beneath me, lulled me into a sort of dizzy rapture, till the pleasure melted into a half-conscious dread — could it be that Nature's gifts were free? — and I wholly woke, and, roused with difficulty, doubted what such dream, such vision might show.

That is the wooing of the great god Pan. Love is loneliness; the self expands to cherish all it can embrace, and, reflected upon its adopted mirror, it expands and ascends till it becomes too subtle for a medium, and then it is re-absorbed into the selfish, soulless beloved. Bah! I gaze from a height on the lovely colors of sky and sea-weed till I envy the birds their seasick rocking in mid-air, and would fain dissolve into the view; but I am sane enough to know that pebbles are hard, and a corpse devoured by crabs as unpicturesque as the public-houses where coroners' juries sit; so I forbear to throw myself headlong. But, as I say, that is the wooing of the great god Pan, and it is even so the daughters of men are won. Who will teach them that lovers' hearts are harder than flinty shingle, and that 'twere better crabs should multiply than sinners?

I paid my farewells to this spot uninterrupted. It was but three weeks ere we went our several ways, but I felt as if something was gone to which I had accustomed myself. During a short visit to Mrs. —— in town, I met him again in society, which allowed of shorter *tête-à-têtes* than Westream, and I attributed to the change of circumstances the fact of his adopting a more demonstrative and less confidential manner; and yet I never knew any one try to flirt with me. When I went home, I could not read steadily, I wrote spasmodi-

cally, I dawdled away the days; it seemed as if something must happen to break up my habits, and it was not worth while renewing them for so short a time. By and by he came down to our neighborhood, to see his publisher and the country, he said: to see me, my aunt's maid slowly and reluctantly began to suspect. I do believe she thinks my aunt and I stay single out of deference to her advice.

The next two months were the most miserable of my life. There is no disguising the fact. Herbert and I (we learnt to use Christian names in Cornwall) — Herbert and I might have loved each other more passionately than three-fourths of the couples joined together in holy matrimony; but there was no faith in our love, so pride was stronger than it. He might have taught me to love him, I might have led him to wish to teach; instead, we both felt like moths of one mind in view of a brilliant candle. In marrying me, he would have sacrificed strong tastes to a preference that would need explaining to his friends; in marrying him, I should have made the sacrifice of proud self-sufficiency which some women will only render to Sathanas eloquent as an angel of light. (And only genius and dishonesty are eloquent, but the first is rare; that is why good women misplace their affection.)

A woman who is won before she is wooed is the worst part of a man: I did not even wish to be wooed. He thought me cold; I thought him —

well, for a poet, ungenerous; for a man, irresolute. Sometimes I was possessed with a nervous terror lest he should speak words which must put an end to the armed neutrality of our friendship, and yet I would have given worlds could we have come to an understanding, on points concerning which there was nothing to explain, even if they had admitted of explanation. Had we loved — for, mind you, we never really went as far as that — had we loved, we should have *aimé d'amour*, as our neighbors say; but a *grande passion* is dangerous: fate balances it impartially between heaven and hell, and chance may turn the scale either way. We were each jealous, not of any third person, but of the part of each other's mind which maintained its independence: we were each prudent; he would not risk his material, nor I my spiritual future: we were each unjust in throwing on the other the blame of our own conduct and character: we both, I think, regretted the difficulties these placed in the way of the harmony we both, I think, desired. His — what shall I call it? It was half admiration and a quarter liking; — his feelings towards me were manifest enough to have compromised any one less "serious" than myself with any one younger or less important than him. As it was, my friends — had I had any to speak of — might, on the face of it, have accused him of trifling with my feelings, had they credited me with such weak-

nesses; yet at this moment he believes, I have no doubt, that it only rested with me to accept and recompense the homage he had not quite made up his mind to tender. Love bought with coquetry, or at least with the frank appeals of voluntary fascination, may be as deep and true as any, but the price put it out of my reach. Have I, then, anything to complain of or regret? I do neither, because I make a rule of not regretting what follows from the known and accepted nature of things. Yet it is certain that to part from Herbert L —— with the possibilities of our relation undeveloped was the first and only purely personal and sentimental grief I remember to have experienced.

I had better come back to narrative. Just six months ago, at nine in the evening, the moon was beginning to shine and the air to soften after a frosty day. I can never resist the temptation of that opaque, blue brilliancy. I threw the window up and stepped out on the lawn, sent Willy to tell the elders I was gone down to the sea, and without waiting for remonstrances about night air or tipsy sailors, I jumped down the garden wall, and, hurrying over the heaps of mal-odorous *débris* beyond, soon reached the firm sand.

Then I began to feel the silence and solitude oppressive, and I walked faster and faster, as if to escape from it. I was horribly afraid of the dark as a child, and my own shadow on the broad sands

gave me even then a kind of shiver. I felt almost as if I had escaped an enemy when I reached the broken rocks where I could not see it; there was comfort in the fragments of sandstone, in the ivy hanging down to the water's edge, in the sea-weed reefs — in anything that shared that sweet heartless light. I had been striding on over the rough stones for perhaps ten minutes, when I heard steps and then his voice. He had called to bid us good-by, and my aunt had begged him to overtake, protect and bring me back; he said nothing about the last. We came soon to a little shingly cove, and I sat down upon the pebbles still glistening in the moonlight from the receding tide (except clumps of heather there is no better couch than fine shingle). He asked my leave to light a cigar, and I praised the fragrant fumes as I threw stones from one hand to the other, or into a little pool on my left. The wind was from the land, and by and by I heard eleven strike; we rose simultaneously, and neither spoke till we were half-way over the reach of sand.

Then I turned to look at the water; little but foam to be seen sweeping down with the furious back-draught of the waves, or tossed high into the moonlight on rough crests shutting out the horizon. He asked me, I think, why I was so fond of the sea. I answered sleepily that I felt sorry for it; the moon and the earth were tyrannical, and I should like the ocean with one deep sigh to find its

level over all, and then its labored breathing would not seem so painful to me. Then another silence. As we neared the house he said, "I think I shall join that tour, Hester."

I: "They have an attractive programme."

He: "Yes: a three years' absence from England."

I: "One place is very like another."

He: "And one woman?"

I: "No; there is a difference amongst them: some are handsome and some plain; all strange countries have their beauties."

He: "I did not mean physically; some women have a husband, and some a cat, — or a mastiff. Could you ever care for any one besides Mephisto and your aunt?"

I: "What would the former say?

> Es steht mir an der Stirn, geschrieben,
> Dass ich nicht mag eine Seele lieben."

We had reached the garden gate.

He: "Well, I shall write to you if anything amusing happens to us."

I: "Thanks; you reckon to be back in time for the next general election?"

He: "Yes; my mother will have found out by then whom she wants me to marry, and I shall have done writing lyrics on the impossible."

We had answered each other at cross purposes

before, but this was the last time; next morning he started for Constantinople. Impossible! . . . .

Was ever anything impossible to an unscrupulous woman? Whose fault was it? Why should I think that any one was in fault at all? All that I am I have myself to thank for, and I will not be ungrateful. Not the wealth of the Rothschilds nor the affection of Paul and Virginia would ever have made a happy woman of me; yet I, who think myself wiser than most, need surely not be less contented than the many. The story is really this: In love with love, I could not love him; in love with loving, I cursed the truth as I felt it. In good sooth I think it *was* a curse, a visitation of indignant Providence. If I did not love God whom I had not seen, how could I love my brother whom I had seen, *pur troppo?* Was I, who had nearly reached, and that unwounded, the point of resigned and candid serenity, beyond which, let the Utilitarians say what they will, evil is tolerable and good on the whole indifferent, — was I, who had done with the troubles of life, who seemed to have half done with life itself, — was I of my own accord to enter upon a triple abyss of living, to undertake responsibilities heavier than the heaviest I had ever made a conscience of evading, to trust myself on a whirlpool of wish-breeding action, to have two bodies and one spirit — careful and troubled about many things? . . . The woes of a married woman

have a name and a contemptible body apiece: they are servants, or scarlatina, or whist parties, or a stationary income; but these are finite, if not tolerable. If tolerable, how infinitely vast is the vague *malaise* of the maiden who, clothed with ashes and feeding upon dust, dares not even trust the evidence of her senses that such is the universal food of the rebellious sons of God, who close their eyes to His mercies lest they should be blinded by the dust and ashes, in which, even to the elect, it does seem to me, the mercies come enveloped!

Ah! well, love is an affair of confused ideas, as Spinoza would say, and mine are clear enough and to spare. At least I am no Narcissus; there is nothing so hopelessly unamiable as a *malapropos* clearness of vision. And now to sleep: thank somebody! I never dream . . . but I am so very wide awake! Here is another erotic antinomy. Love is a passion, self-impelling towards the beloved object, but it asks for reciprocity, and if the two subject-objects rush with equal force each to other's embrace — why, you have a deadlock, followed, if I have not forgotten my mechanics, by a rebound. Conclusion: a perfect love-match is humanly impossible: the practical compromise in use waives the reciprocity; one loves, the other is beloved; the issue for one party, any way, either tragic or effeminate; in no case beautiful: — that is why we deify courtship, where love is not yet shut

out from the possibility of return by the acceptance which stifles or starves it.

He wrote to me once, about three months later, with kind friendliness, after my aunt's death, asking my plans and urging the acceptance of his sister's invitation to spend the winter in Italy with her daughters. I wrote half-a-dozen answers, all describing my proposed plans in terms all equally well-adapted to distress and scandalize him, but on reflection I sent none of them, and tried to think that a message through his sister and another through his nieces would serve every purpose of courtesy. I suppose it was schoolgirlish to take refuge in silence, but an intellectual flirtation seems to me the inanest of any. I dislike play-acting my life. In all contingencies the easiest course is to do nothing — but grumble at the nothingness of life, when *ex nihilo, nihil fit.*

VIII.

Love and Friendship.

Ask the same for me, for friends should have all things in common.

—PLATO.

VIII.

IT is a mistake to say that marriage spoils friendship. Few of my best friends have been singly blessed. If your friend has a soul large enough to love wisely and supremely well, whatever enriches his life and adds to his happiness will enrich his capacity for friendship and add to your delight in his society. It is a poor soul that can only love one at a time. If you lose your friend by marriage, of two things, one: either he was not much loss, or you are not. I think very often when people ostentatiously proclaim that they will withdraw from an old intimacy because their intimate has got a wife, they have an unconscious dread of showing their souls in the undress of friendship to an unbiassed eye. It is a test, and a severe one, of mutual love, and more rare mutual respect, when the two who are as one have nothing between them that an old friend cannot wholly love; and not less so for the friend who comes *en tiers*, to ask nothing from either that he dares not ask from both. But if this double difficulty can be overcome, a more than commonly precious friendship survives. The pe-

culiar fragrance of a love *à deux* can only be enjoyed by those who have passed master in the art of loving, and the rarity of these, not the selfishness of happy love, is the cause of the common error that marriage and old friendship are incompatible goods.

I was staying with two old and married friends in Brittany. The so-called château is half a farm, the buildings more like a farmhouse than most English manors, but all unspoilt by modernization. I am thinking of a May morning, when the roses hid the tangled bushes with pink and white cushions of sweet bloom that seemed to lose their beauty in sheer abundance; the path, down an avenue of overarching roses, was strewn with fallen pink-white rose-leaves, just flecked with blood-red damask petals; the air was still with heat; but Madame V——, who is a very salamander, called me to attend her on her rounds. The white hens were fed, the new calf talked to, and the gardener admonished about the price of butter. It was refreshing to see how cool and happy Madame looked in her quaint print dress, with a huge parasol of the same color shielding her stately head and the fine benignant face, of which the two chief beauties were two bright brown eyes and a crown of silver waving hair. With her white hair she looked, as she was, between fifty and sixty, and very beautiful; without it she would have looked thirty, and handsome.

In watching her I forgot the heat, and was led willingly through garden, yard and orchard, to the steps by the old fishpond. From a sort of grass landing there start two flights of wide, shallow, stone steps, gray with age, and making room here and there in their cracks for a little pink or yellow stonecrop; in their deserted massiveness they seemed fit for the approach to some palace of sleeping beauty. Madame ascended leisurely; I followed, listening to her fluent, humorous chat concerning all the neighbors, in whose private affairs I was kept diligently posted up from year to year.

Bees and butterflies filled the air with a cheerful humming brightness. Without ceasing her talk, Madame gathered a large sweet scabious, and let the bloom lie loosely on her open palm. I wondered what she meant to do with it, but half a minute later, as I looked at her again, a gorgeous butterfly was resting on the flower, sucking its sweetness. and then, yes, actually walking about upon the lady's hand; the little palm was white and pink, like one of the blush roses climbing up the parapet; but when I gathered one and held it alongside, the butterfly flew off untempted.

A narrow grass terrace, planted with cherry-trees, lay at the top of the steps, and on reaching it one saw that the steps only led up a mound, an embankment, enclosing the oblong fish-tank, where perch

and eels were still to be caught by those who loved such modest sport. There is something strangely reposeful in the prim squareness of this old-fashioned gardening; perhaps it comes from the suggestion of orderly abundance, where every flower and fruit-tree grows so freely that even when all rank edges are pruned off to a demure dead level, still the remaining square-toed shrubs, straight sentinels and pyramidical espaliers, prove to have lost no more than they can afford, and are still luxuriant with flowers, fruit and moist deep greenery. After all, it is half an affair of climate; where plants can hardly be coaxed to grow at all, who can have the heart to tease them into growing tidily? But prim tidiness amid abundance refreshes one like a virtue; it savors of antique temperance and all the homely graces of the golden mean. From whichever side one looked, the poplars and dovecote reached symmetrically into the sky.

Madame spread a shawl upon the low gray parapet, and invited me to sit on the grass at her feet, and *faire mon salut* like a good Catholic by a full confession of all my sins and follies. "To begin with," she said, with a caressing little air that it was impossible to answer except just in the way she wanted, "why is it that you stay with us six weeks instead of four, and that yet you do not grow gayer for giving us this pleasure?"

I said the pleasure of being with Madame was

that she could answer as well as ask questions more charmingly than anybody in the world.

"Then," she replied, "why do you not ask me questions?"

Now this was exactly what, for the last fortnight of my stay, I had been trying to summon up courage to do. I asked, "Ought I not to have stayed this fortnight?"

She said, "Elma is going to leave us this day week."

I tried to put a thousand questions into my eyes, and as she did not speak again fell back upon an interrogative — "Après?"

She accused me of being as unreasonable as the unreasonable king who wanted his dream interpreted before he had told it.

I said, "Is it not given to the best of friends to answer thoughts that can hardly quite be spoken?"

Madame answered, "You are right: it would be wronging Elma for you to speak of her even to so old a friend as I am; but though she is a sweet woman, to whom I would not grudge my dearest friend, she could not be hurt because I — To me you are first — before her; and I have a right to ask what will be good, be best, for you, *mon ami*, now?"

What could I say more than she knew already — that I wanted to know whether I might dare to think of marriage and speak of love to Elma. I

had nothing to tell Madame but what she had seen and knew. I only knew Elma in her unapproachable calm; did she ever seek or want a friend's — not counsel — but sympathy at least? God forbid that I should ever discuss her feelings with another, but she owed me no such reserve; what had she allowed the all-seeing Madame to divine about her feelings towards me?

Some such questions as these reached my kind friend's ready understanding with little help from words, but she hesitated to reply.

After a pause she began: "Elma never spoke to me of you — she does not speak, you know, of herself or feelings not of every day; but she said to me something that I could only think of in connection with you. If I tell it you, it sounds of bad augury, but I do not know for certain if it is bad." She laid her hand gently on mine and said, "One friend cannot always save another from the pain of this uncertainty. She is very proud and shy. Do not think me stupid because I cannot quite guess what, perhaps, she does not yet quite know herself. But I am not quite, quite sure that you would find her heart all ice and iron behind the wall of proud reserve."

My friend was kind: I used to the uttermost a friend's privileged ingratitude, and gave no thanks. I could think only of the question, "Tell me what she said?"

Madame was pitiful, and only kept me waiting for one more proviso: "I tell you the saying; the interpretation is not yet revealed. I was speaking, all in the air, though I thought of more than one of my friends, about the sweetness of a woman's life, the glory of the power that comes when a woman has but to let herself be loved, and a strong man grows glad to do every deed that is fair and noble like the lady of his love. It was all *à propos* of the age of chivalry; if any names were mentioned, it was only in our thoughts"—

"And she?" I interrupted.

"Let me tell you it all at length. There was a melancholic hero of romance, and he was pleading with his lady-love: was there nothing in all the world she wanted to have done, nothing that he might have the pleasure of doing for her sake—he asked no guerdon of love or hope; only, if she had the least preference, surely she could not be vexed with him if he asked the little gift of leave to do, with no other reward than that, whatever she might, with ever so faint a preference, choose not to have left undone? I defended the faint-hearted lover.

"Elma spoke less tranquilly than usual.

"'You and these knights of yours fix on women an ungracious *rôle*. How if the lady's preference be that he should find elsewhere than in her wish the determining motive of his life? They profess

modestly they ask so little: is it a small thing to be the mistress of a man's soul's fate? I say it is a tyranny to tell a woman that — whether she accepts it or not, whether she speaks or keeps silence, whether she finds her suitor a quest to follow for her sake, or dismisses him at once and forever — that the burden of his doom is on her still, and the responsibility of his fate lying inalienably at her door. If men are helpless and to be pitied, what else are women, I should like to know? Is it a man's duty, too, to lay at each woman's feet the very life she wishes to dispose of at her will? We are all fates — and not all kind ones — to each other: why should women only be always called on to be kind?'

"Elma said all this with a glitter in her soft eyes, and a color like the faint blush of anger rising over neck, cheek and temples. She spoke almost angrily, and as if she were defending herself; and therefore," Madame concluded, "I said to myself, my friend's case is not hopeless; people do not defend themselves angrily unless they suspect a danger. Elma has played at matronly independence so long that she has forgotten the first condition of that state. It is not a crime if some one else has been the first to think or speak of love; but she has a generous nature, and it is possible that in her secret mind she would count it as a crime in herself *not* to have been the first to think. But I

may be wrong, my friend; trust only your own judgment and Elma's generous soul."

I kissed my friend's hand, and paced alone up and down the green alley on the three sides of the tank, learning by heart every feature in the prim picturesqueness of the back view of the château and its homely outworks. I felt chained to the spot where the doubtful, hopeful, most doubtful oracle was spoken. In youth one does not hesitate about trying for the good one wishes for; if I hesitated now, it was not because the wishes were less strong, but as men grow older, one notices their caution in nothing more than this: they do not like any one but themselves to act as executioner to their own rash hopes.

The hours passed unheeded overhead while I let every motive have its say in turn, and it was only when rain began to fall that I noticed the change of temperature and an approaching storm. It was time to prepare for the early dinner-hour and long evening, always pleasant, but somehow strangely dreaded after to-day's revelations.

The wind had risen to a gale; the roaring of the distant sea mixed with the pelting rain, and the big drawing-room grew chilly in the twilight. Madame called for logs, and presently a cheerful blaze crackled upon the hearth; it was like a winter's evening; the shutters were closed against the storm, and I felt as if six months had passed since

the summer morning by the fishpond. The drawing-room was large, dark, and many-cornered; the oak rafters in the roof added to the shade. The walls were tapestried, not newly, with patched hangings from the *bric-à-brac* dealers; the tapestry was worn and dim with smoke and age, but it had grow dim upon these walls, and the simper of the ladies' faces, the cabbage-roses and the spread peacock's tail had faded into a sober harmony; the pictures on the walls seemed in the firelight as if they had grown there, like shadows cast by a forgotten world, or pictures in the living mirror of the Lady of Shalott.

To know the château at its best you must see it in summer days and winter evenings, but only Madame's witchcraft could let her guests enjoy both between two rising suns. I said so as we four drew round the hearth. It was one of those old chimneys in which the "ingle-nook" is not an empty word. As the fire blazed upon the logs, there was room for a ring of children to dance all round it safely in one of their old heathen Christmas games. In winter the host and hostess always drew their arm-chairs inside the chimney, while the guests circled round in front. This evening the husband and wife sat opposite by the chimney breasts; I was next to Madame, and the other lady by the Admiral. It is not easy to look one's next neighbor in the face: we both kept our eyes upon the fire.

I reminded Madame of past winter evenings, and the strange collection of stories that were told when no guest was allowed to escape the toll.

"Let us have some stories to-night," said the Admiral; "and it is Madame's turn to begin."

The special charm of the château is that nothing ever takes our host and hostess at a loss. There is an answer ready for every saying, a prompt device for contenting each casual wish. I wished this evening above everything to avoid the risks of conversation, and I prayed that Madame would tell us a long, sad romance to match the wailings of the wind.

She said: "Elma and I have been reading old French romances, but she grew tired of the hard-hearted ladies and their languishing cavaliers; she would read no more, and thus she missed the story of the Lady of Eza and her loyal serving-man. Shall I tell you that?"

The listening trio with one voice bade her tell on.

She told us of a castle perched on a rocky peak by the southern sea; the sea washed its feet on one side; a torrent-bed with steep wooded sides guarded another, and bare rocky precipices the third; while from the landward north a steep narrow stony track zigzagged up the least inaccessible slope of the hill. Long ago, when the castle was still famed for many gallant sieges, when Moors and pirates and near rivals, who coveted the strongest

stronghold on the coast, brought their forces in turn against it — in those days of long ago a fair maiden was left sole heiress of the famous keep, and her youth was beset with stormy wooings, till in her fourteenth year a powerful Baron, with scarred face and an arm few cared to meet in battle, married her in the castle chapel, though 'twas said he brought the priest to read the service with him, and came an uninvited, unwished guest.

Among the men-at-arms of the castle was a foundling youth, brought up in charity by the maiden's father — a silent, awkward youth, speaking slowly, and with a strange accent, as if haunted by the memory of his unknown parents' tongue. And whatsoever the lady's wish might be, he ran to do her will, but for the most part with a stupid haste that brought him little thanks. When she was a thoughtless child, and asked for a tame eaglet to play with, or blue hepaticas to deck Our Lady's shrine in winter, Uc, the stranger, would dash through the enemies' border for the flowers, and lie in prison till their season was over; or he would haunt the rocks for weeks and come back with the screaming nestlings and a broken arm, when the child had forgotten her fancy.

On this night, when the Baron craved the castle's hospitality, and the maiden's mother dared not refuse to let him in, the maiden whispered to her servant, "Fly, tell my cousin Perdigon of Peglia to

bring fleet horses to the road above Turbia, and meet me himself at the cross by the fountain at foot of the castle path. He must wait there till morning, but ere midnight I must, I will, be there."

And the serving-man stole off from his watch, and rode and ran to the tall eyrie of Peglia, the Eza of the hills, where the young knight was holding revel; and, pray as he would, even to the avowing that he bore a message from the maid of Eza, either no message reached the knight, or none was heeded in his revels. Next morning, indeed, he chid the lady's messenger for not having fought his way through the guards and forced a hearing for her words; and he set forth then with horses, and rode on to the very castle gates, but maid and castle were the Baron's now, and the lady frowned upon her servant. And so, again and again the henchman risked life and limbs in her service, and still her will was missed, or else another had the thanks. Six times, as boy and man, Uc, the stranger, pressed forward in her needs, and each time she bade another do her will. The last time the charge was to go and bring news of how her true knight fared. He was with the King's troops in Provence, while the Baron wore the cross in Palestine. The Knight Perdigon was slain, and the little old trooper blessed the saints that this time at least she had refused his service.

Then the next year she died, and the bier was to be borne solemnly to lie in state in the castle chapel,

and the chief mourners walked at the head and feet, bearing a massive taper. Her husband, her brother (by the left hand), and her young son were there, and the fourth place was claimed by fierce kinsmen of equal degree. The Baron looked round and knit his brow, for the last eager claim was made by the twin brother of that dead cousin Perdigon, whose lute-twanging was all too sweet to her ears in life. He looked round upon the squires and stalwart men-at-arms, till his eye met Uc, the stranger.

"How long hast thou served my lady?"

The wrinkled, wooden features hardly moved, and a quavering voice made answer —

"Seven times seven years," he said, "as the clock strikes the hour before this next midnight."

The Baron smiled, well pleased.

"The knave can reckon," quoth he; "forty-nine years ago, as the clock struck eleven at night, my lady's father gave shelter to a wailing beggar's brat, and we have heard him tell that he hath served one mistress ever since, and because none have served her longer — nor I trow loved more loyally — do thou, Uc, the stranger, bear the fourth taper."

None can say whether it was joy or fear or a blind awe, as of the last judgment and the open gates of heaven and hell, that filled the old trooper's silent soul. They bore his lady to the chapel, and the light of his taper never shook or wavered; then as the priests chanted their requiem, the mourners

knelt, two at the head of the uplifted bier, and the little son and the old serving-man side by side at the feet. The long chants were over, the curling incense only lingered like a cloud round the roof, the solemn blessing had been said, and three of the mourners rose, to return as they had come to the world that she had left. But, upright with the taper between his hands, like an uplifted banner in the battle's charge, the old serving-man knelt still; they spoke to him in a whispered voice, and he made no sign. No one dared to touch him, and the little son cried out —

"Father! why are his eyes open when he does not see?"

The Baron said, "Let him watch by his lady to-night. Did I not tell you his love and service were more faithful than we all?"

And through the night the dead henchman knelt at the feet of the dead lady; and on the morrow, when they raised the chapel floor, and laid her in the stone coffin in the vault below, the man-at-arms knelt still, stiff and cold as a statue of stone within his armor. So they closed his visor, and placed a cross in the clenched hands where the taper had burnt itself out unheeded, and left him kneeling in the vault at his lady's feet. And five centuries afterwards a skeleton in armor was found kneeling still, cross in hand, at the foot of the coffin where the Baron's bones lay at his lady's side.

Perhaps it was more the dim firelight and Madame's sweet voice than the letter of the old romance that held her hearers silent: it was a foolish tale to let one's self be moved by, yet I was glad when Elma said —

"At least, this lady was not cruel, and the henchman had his reward; for they tell us to call no man fortunate or wretched until we know the manner of his death."

The Admiral said it was a dismal tale, but if the ladies liked to cry, he would tell them another, wherein *il y en avait de quoi*.

The Admiral's tales were seldom short, and we composed ourselves to listen at ease. He was telling about a voyage of his own to South America, and it was not necessary to attend closely. I looked furtively at my neighbor; it was strange how seldom it seemed possible to let one's eyes rest upon her face for as long as it was natural to wish, and the difficulty added to the longing for the rare, sweet pleasure. I watched her now; she was listening quite pensively, with her eyes fixed upon a burning log, from which red-hot fragments kept falling upon a little heap of ashes, that turned from red to gray and white as they lay; I might therefore look my fill. There was a faint far-away touch of Spanish — it might be Moorish — blood in her veins, and there was something Oriental in the softness of her large

brown eyes, when she was looking, as now, unconcernedly into space.

The tender sweetness of her face and movements when she was or felt herself alone, or alone with children, seemed to crystallize involuntarily into a dignified reserve if any other voice or eye was near. I do not know if it was first assumed in self-defence; if so, it was a useless weapon, for that unconscious air of calm repose acted like a spell. She used to be seriously annoyed by the hosts of applicants who, as she travelled with her father, prayed him for leave to seek her hand. She was eight-and-twenty now; the first year of orphanhood was nearly over; but perhaps she looked older than this. A wife of eight-and-twenty is very young. Elma seemed to have attained a ripe wisdom, most unlike of all to those women, not quite young, who never cease to be called "girls" until they marry. In travelling abroad with her father, Elma was usually taken by strangers for his wife — a mistake which she did not correct unless obliged; she said it saved trouble and made people treat her with more respect.

Respect was the first feeling she inspired, admiration the second — and not the last! But one was afraid of her still; she had such a statuesque repose, such an air of asking nothing from any man, that it seemed in one's imagination like an insult to offer her the homage on which her eyes fell only with calm surprise. She loved her father, old friends of

his and of her youth, and all little children, and she smiled on the adoration of schoolboys; but the world of marriageable men seemed not to exist for her, or to exist as it does for a contented matron. It was one of her chief attractions to me that she seemed to possess in her own right the composure and content which belongs to men and women who have sought and found. In unattractive women the same indifference repels us as discourtesy; it is a gratuitous incivility to refuse what we do not for a moment mean to ask for, but not to offer that which we cannot but desire eagerly, seems a wise and sweet reserve. Anyway, a man who has waited till near forty without marrying, has no time to lose with a bride needing to put away childish things. The man who could win Elma would enter at once upon a boundless ocean of still happiness, unchanging as the gracious calm of her simplest movement.

"Now, there are giants in Patagonia" — the Admiral had apparently finished his voyage, and there was a change in the intonation of his voice which roused me like a call. I began to listen, and as I listened, I dared not keep my eyes on Elma's face.

"There are giants in Patagonia; and in some regions of South America, which I should not like to name lest any of you should have friends within a thousand miles, there are sorceresses too. My learned friend, the Herr Doktor Liebdünkeln, who

is corresponding member of all the folklore societies of Europe, assures me that it is from this region, in the neighborhood of Patagonia, that all known versions of a widespread folk-tale are derived — the tale, to wit, of the giant with no heart in his body.

"According to the story, ladies" (folklore is one of my hobbies, so the gallant Admiral did not venture to look my way), "some princesses skilled in magic have the art of charming the hearts of giants out of their bodies. If, when this is done, the giant can get hold of his own heart again, and securely wrap it up in silver paper in an ivory casket, in a cedar box, in a golden case, in a leaden coffer, and then hide the coffer in a basket of flags in the nest of an unknown bird, in the heart of the Invisible Tree that grows at the top of the Inaccessible Hills, then the giant will be quite safe, and the princess lives with him, and cooks his food, and combs his beard, and never thinks of the prince of her own race who is roaming the world in search of her.

"Now giants, like men and princes, are good and bad, and it is mostly the bad giants who have hidden their hearts in the Inaccessible Hills; so in the stories, when the true prince finds his way, in spite of dragons, ogresses and lions, to the heart of the Invisible Tree, and opens all the coverings, and squeezes the giant's heart till he dies, and the prin-

cess is set free from her enchantment, no one is sorry for the giant.

"But in folk-tales, as Herr Doktor Liebdünkeln and our friend Willy Welshman here will tell you, every story is told two ways, with the lights and shadows changing places; and in my true story you will be sorry for Eieiaio. For there is a secret that bad fairies tell to royal god-daughters, who are wicked too, and this is, that if the princess who has charmed the giant's heart out of his body can make him look the other way, and snatch it from him before he has wrapped it up in the silver paper in the ivory casket, in the cedar box, in the golden case, in the leaden coffer, or before he has hidden the leaden coffer in the basket of flags in the nest of the unknown bird, in the heart of the Invisible Tree that grows at the top of the Inaccessible Hills, then she will hold the giant's life in her hands, and instead of cooking his food and combing his beard, she may make the giant fetch and do whatever she is pleased to command him.

"It is said that the first giant who put his heart away in the Inaccessible Hills had great difficulty in finding a sorceress to help him. They all knew that he did not mean to let them keep it for him, and that he only wanted to get rid of it in order to be invulnerable in battle; for, of course, when a giant has no heart in his body no blows can hurt or weapons slay him. A sword or bullet can pass

right through where men's hearts grow and he only laughs — a terrible laugh, that freezes the enemy's blood, and sometimes kills him with terror before the return blow falls. A giant with no heart in his body is never tired, or hungry, or disappointed; he can conquer kingdoms, because he never wants them too much to be able to wait for the right moment; and when the kingdoms are his, he gives them away as easily, to the first who asks him, because (people whisper) he 'has no heart to keep them.' These giants are cruel, and some people mistake them for vampires, because they often stab their victims through the heart and then pretend they did not know such wounds were mortal.

"Well, after the voyage in *La Belle Jouvence*, about which I was telling you, we were put ashore in Patagonia, and before we left the country I learned to know some of the giants who live there, more particularly one of them, whose name was Eieiaio, and — ladies, don't be frightened — you may believe an old sailor when I tell you *he had got no heart in his body*. He walked about and was none the worse; but the place where his heart had been was just a hollow cavity, quite healed and skinned over, so much so that he said it would be no use to put his heart back now — it could never grow again so as to live and beat inside him.

"It is not etiquette in this country to ask a giant any questions about where he keeps his heart, be-

cause everybody knows that if the answer was overheard by or repeated to any rash or mischievous persons, they might use the power thus given them to murder the confiding giant. Still even in Patagonia there are whispering gossips, and I soon found it was generally believed (and this was one reason why good mothers and daughters were a little cool to my friend), that instead of being safely stored away in the Inaccessible Hills, Eieiaio's heart was kept by a strange princess from the Lands of the Rising Sun, called the Donna Violante.

"She had long black hair that reached down to her feet, and large black eyes that sometimes flashed and sometimes melted, and she had tiny pearl-white hands and a foot so tiny, Chinese women's slippers were almost long enough for her to wear. Her dress was of soft amber silk, and black lace hung over her head and neck and round white arms. She carried a large fan of peacocks' feathers, and a little round white fluffy dog, both of which, it was said, she used in her enchantments; and when she danced the Zamaçueca, the stars stood still to see her, and the giants' hearts leaped for joy.

"After setting our party ashore, *La Belle Jouvence* was to go through the Straits of Magellan, and take observations of the tides and currents about that dangerous coast. I had leave to make an expedition across country and rejoin the ship at

Santiago, and Eieiaio agreed to accompany the exploring party. The Inaccessible Hills were said by tradition to lie somewhere behind the highest peaks of the Andes, that would be in sight from our route; and he had some thoughts of persuading Donna Violante to relinquish her prize and let him follow the custom of his fathers, and place his heart in safety in the nest of the unknown bird.

"The lady dwelt in a magic palace by a lake; an impenetrable hedge of aloes and cactus surrounded her magic garden, where all the gorgeous flowers of the tropics bloomed among delicious fruits from every clime. There was a spell upon the palace, forbidding any kind of human work to be done by its inmates; to eat, and drink, and sleep and play, and sleep and play, and drink the sweet iced juice of the abounding fruits, and eat and sleep again: this was the day's business for the human guests; but we could not escape the dread conjecture that unearthly rites went on unseen, and that it was here the awful spells were worked by which the hearts were drawn out of the groaning giants' bodies. By night unearthly shrieks and sighs were heard — at least I thought so in my sleep, though by the time I had awoke these sounds were changed, no doubt by magic, into the twanging of a guitar outside the window, or a whispered duet under the magnolia boughs. And when I ventured to speak to Eieiaio of these sounds, he

warned me to let no one know I heard them; and he added, as if to comfort me, that though the cry sounded like a human agony, still they were uttered by beings whom none can force to undergo the pain. The giant and the sorceress must agree together for the horrid spell to work.

"Now, ladies, I have seen many horrid things in my travels; I have seen a human body half-carved by feasting cannibals; I have seen starved families lying dead by the roadside in India; I have seen the dungeons of Bomba's Naples and the prisoners in a Russian mine; I have seen the hideous gayety of drunken vice in a Parisian den; but I never felt a shudder of more horrid fear than on the day when I found out where Eieiaio's heart was kept.

"But I must tell you first about another way in which the giants' hearts can be kept safely.

"If they are hidden away in the Invisible Hills, it is just the same as if the giant had no heart at all, it grows cold and hard because there is no warm blood to fill it; they feel no pain or pleasure, and if they do good or wicked things it is without knowing what they are doing. But if, when the heart first comes out of his body, the giant can find a little child or a maid who has never had an evil thought, and gives his still warm heart to one of these to have and hold and cherish, it is just the same as if his heart were still beating and living in its proper place, with a happy glow all round. The little

child or the maid who has never had an evil thought carries her charge about with her tenderly, in soft warm hands, and if she is obliged to lay it aside for a moment she puts it down gently, with a kind caress, and says to it, 'Lie still, little heart,' and then the heart and the giant sleep and have happy dreams till she comes back and bids it wake, and carries it again tenderly as a mother does a child.

"Now when Eieiaio gave his heart to the Senora, he thought she was one of those guileless maids or children, for she was able by her enchantments to make herself look young and good, half like one of these true guardians and half like the other, for no magic can quite imitate a true child and maid. But Eieiaio was deceived, and still when I urged him to break the enchantment and let me force the Senora to relinquish her prey, he would not quite believe me, and said, 'Nay, but surely she is young and good: she plays with my heart now — she is only young; but when she has done with playing she will take it up again in soft gentle hunds, and carry it with her tenderly, and I shall live again, and feel it beat within me, with a happy glow all round.'

"But though he said this, and by her enchantments she had power to make him almost believe it, I knew that he had come to the magic villa now in hopes of moving her to let him have his heart

again, because of the strange fits of sickness that had attacked him of late. He went to English medicine men, and they talked about *angina pectoris* and rheumatism of the heart: the science of the Old World is in its infancy, and Eieiaio did not dare to tell them, lest they should have thought him mad, that the gnawing ache which seized him could not come from rheumatism of the heart when his heart was a thousand miles away.

"And now I must tell you how I learnt where the Senora really kept his heart.

"She used to feed the little white fluffy dog, who was one of the instruments of her enchantment, with chocolate and sweetmeats, and there was an embroidered velvet reticule full of these dainties always lying about upon her sofa-table. One day I noticed that there were *two* such reticules, just alike, lying together. Fluff was begging, with one paw up, his head cocked wickedly on one side, and a black eye winking at his mistress. She took up one of the velvet bags, and carelessly, while she was looking the other way, seemed to feel in it for a *bonbon*.

"Eieiaio turned pale, the veins on his forehead were knotted as if with pain, and I thought he was about to faint. I got up to go to him, but meanwhile the color came back to his face, and I heard the Senora laugh, and say she had been looking in the wrong bag.

"The little scene made an uncomfortable impression on me, and gradually I made sure that Donna Violante kept the giant's heart in the second velvet reticule, and that when he turned pale, as if on the verge of death, it was because she had tossed the reticule upon the ground for Fluff to play with, or was scrunching it unkindly into hidden corners when she wanted it to be out of the way.

"Once I came in as Fluff was worrying the bag, which she pretended was the one that held the bonbons, and he was to show his cleverness by untying the strings and getting one out for himself. Eieiaio was in the room as the sorceress watched this cruel sport, and he sat pale and silent as a ghost while the little fiend's paws trampled on his life. I snatched the bag away, and was about to give it to Eieiaio and make the sign of the cross, upon which, you know, the sorceress and all her enchantments would have vanished away into a shower of sulphurous dust. But a spell was on my friend, and with a sad smile he gave it back to the Senora, saying, 'Keep it, or give it back to me yourself.'

"Well, this is nearly the end of the story. Things came to a crisis after Donna Violante was appealed to by another giant whose name was Eieiulo, to take his heart and keep it too. He had been caught as a young orphan by some Wesleyan missionaries, and brought up by them in a college where he had learnt arithmetic; and though he had

escaped from them and returned to the manners and religion of his ancestors, still he could do simple sums in a way unusual among the giants; and he reckoned that the Senora had only two hands, and that therefore she could only take charge safely of at most two giants' hearts at a time.

"After the sign of the cross, there is nothing sorceresses dread so much as arithmetic; and Donna Violante was very angry at being asked how many hearts she had in her keeping. She showed her empty hands, and pretended she had none, and all the while she had got Eieiaio's heart tucked away under the sofa-cushion, between a rosary and a French novel, and she leant her elbows on it as she talked, and I saw my friend writhe under the malicious digs she gave his heart as she moved languidly from one graceful pose to another.

"After this there was an angry scene between them, and at last Eieiaio uttered the fatal words, 'Give me back my heart,' and in his anger he added rashly, 'and then you will have room for Eieiulo's if he isn't too wise to give it you.'

"They were the last words Eieiaio spoke. She smiled fiendishly, and opened the strings of the little bag and took his heart in her hand, saying, 'When you gave it me I promised to keep it as long as you lived; I will be better than my word, and keep it longer. I will never part with it at all; its ashes will take very little room — I will wear it

in my ring instead of this black drop of mortal poison.' She kept one hand clenched round his heart — Eieiaio felt his life ebbing — as she showed him a ring like that King Mithridates wore, and then she let the one black drop of mortal poison fall on Eieiaio's heart.

"The stories say that the giants fall down dead when their heart is killed; but to get at the whole truth about these strange things you must hear the story from somebody who has seen what happens. The giants whose hearts are in the right place are not so much taller than ordinary men; they only seem so because of their wonderful strength and other gifts. They can hear the grass grow, and see what men and women think; they know where the Spice Islands are without crossing the sea, by their scent; they eat the sunlight and drink the falling dew, they understand the language of birds and beasts, and their hands grasp tools a thousand miles away.

"All this is changed when their heart is killed: they fall into a heap that is still shaped like a dead man's body, and the shape moves about by cords and pulleys, like a frog wound up to jump; but they neither see, nor hear, nor taste; they know and feel and understand nothing any more, because their heart is killed. All this Eieiaio knew, but he could neither move nor speak; the sorceress let the black drop fall upon his quivering heart — there was a sudden flash."

. . . . . .

At this moment something uncanny happened! The fire was burning low, and the Admiral's voice was hollow, to match his grisly theme; at this moment there *was* a flash, and a sharp explosion sounded. It was enough to make one believe in witchcraft. A piece of flaming wood had broken off with a crack, and leapt, all glowing, into Elma's lap. I started forward to snatch it away before her dress was scorched, but she too started, and as I grasped the burning fragments in my hand, her hands clasped mine above it: she held them fast, and I thought the tears stood in her eyes. My hand felt like the giant's heart, caressed by a maid who has no evil thoughts. Then she recollected herself, and I threw the cinder back upon the hearth. Madame poked the logs into a blaze, and the Admiral said that was all the story.

. . . . . .

We had been married seven years before I ventured to ask Elma if she thought it was the giant's heart that had leapt into her lap for safety. She smiled then a little consciously, and for all answer asked, "Shall I write to Madame to expect us on the first of May?"

"Yes," I said, "and the Admiral, with Elmina's love, to get his stories ready; but he must never tell her about Eieiaio, because that made mamma cry once."

IX.

Eclipse.

The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

IX.

WHEN I was young, I had great difficulty in entering into the mental state of persons who were unhappy on account of their beliefs or doubts. That people should doubt and wish to believe, or believe and hesitate as to whether they ought not rather to doubt, was something of a psychological mystery to me. I was myself much given to doubting accredited propositions, but then I never doubted the appropriateness of my own doubts, and, as an undergraduate, I earned the character of being, like Macaulay, enviably "cocksure" of all my own opinions. My mind seemed to be incapable of real indecision: if there were a subject on which I had no fixed opinion, I was provisionally confident that the materials for certainty were absent, and I was untroubled by the desire for baseless results. I felt for the victims of doubt as for those of any other unfortunate passion, and pitied them the more because I was not able literally to sympathize. But at last my own turn came, and a long year of indecision remains in memory as one blank moment of exasperating pain, associated, by

a quaint chance, with a cold spring day and an eclipse of the sun.

I had left Oxford for some years, during which a school and college friendship with a man two or three years my senior had continued to grow in strength and intimacy. At the time I speak of he had made a good start at the bar, and was engaged to be married. I had a fellowship, wrote occasionally for the papers, and nursed a secret resentment against fate for not having planted me in surroundings which would have allowed my young wisdom to contribute to the councils of the nation, without the double difficulty of earning money enough to contest a borough, and popularity enough of the platform sort to do so successfully. The only strong natural appetite with which I was troubled, was a taste for holding the reins, and feeling the congregation of my fellows answer to the guiding hand upon their necks. I hadn't any exaggerated ideas of parliamentary importance, but I felt that it would have suited me to be an hereditary legislator, while it didn't suit me at all to be a candidate for popular favor, as if I had wanted power for personal reasons of my own. Besides, I foresaw that when the struggle for place or power is long and hard, almost inevitably the nearer end becomes substituted for the true and remote aim, so that one risks beginning the real struggle lamed in one's best limbs and forgetful of the chief reward.

Hence it was with a rather sulky sense of renunciation that I held back on the occasions when ardent youth is wont to bray disinterestedly in accompaniment of political conflicts or advance. I could not have what I wanted on my own terms, and I was not inclined to put up with makeshifts. Very likely there was a sub-conscious hope or expectation that my retiring merits would be dragged to the light by others, and influence attained at once without the struggles of competitive self-assertion; and as this was far from befalling, naturally the haunting consciousness of deprivation remained the same. I acknowledged the unreasonableness of my discontent, but the fact remained, to the disgrace of my philosophy, that I was both discontented and unreasonable. Stray bits of more or less desirable work that came in my way were not neglected, but on the whole I was idle, uncomfortably idle as well as uncomfortably ambitious.

After a while it struck me that I was playing a childish part; it was true fate had not cast me for the *rôle* of hero that I was so assured of playing best, but it was a confession of imbecility to give up in consequence the attempt to play any part at all. The Laureate had written that "Man is man and master of his fate," and it was one of the things I had been wont to feel "cock-surest" of, that the man who could only do his best by the help of Fortune's favors had a screw loose somewhere in the

knitting together of his mental system. Fortune aiding, middle-sized folk might play a conspicuous part, but what young man ever cared, in the secret recesses of his soul, for a mediocre celebrity? True greatness would be its own circumstances.

In the absence of peremptorily determining motives, I was only too free to choose a career, and, as a first step towards the candid consideration of alternatives, I thought I would have a talk with my thriving practical friend. We were both going up to Oxford for a college meeting — his last, as he was to be married in a month or two. The morning after our arrival we started for an early walk; an eclipse of the sun was to come off, and we agreed to see the end of it from Headington Hill rather than be bothered with science and petticoats at the Observatory.

I wonder why romance still keeps its hold upon the phenomena of sunrise and sunset, whilst eclipses are altogether given up to astronomers and smoked glass; not so much as an old woman deigns to be awed by them. Either I am more superstitious than the general, or I was strangely affected by a mere coincidence; any way the overcasting of my life seemed always afterwards to date from the strange chill darkness of that morning's eclipse. The sun was high up in the heavens as we started, and still so brilliant that the naked eye could hardly be said to perceive any lessening of the radiant orb; but a

more than wintry dulness was upon the landscape, the blue of the sky to the west and north was colder than any gray, and the towers and spires of the ancient city had a spectral air of stillness.

My friend — I will call him Anson — responded readily to my hint that I wanted to talk about plans and prospects of my own. This was nothing new between us; he had before now taken much trouble to induce me to stand for a certain professorship, and I had followed with at least equal interest the story of his briefs and his courtship. We should each have been equally ready to claim from the other such services as pass current in fraternal friendship, equally ready to rely with cheerful confidence on the gratitude of whichever had the luck to play benefactor for the nonce. But this time I wanted Anson not so much to help as to advise, and with this intent I thought it needful to put him in possession of all the circumstances. Now to me the first essential circumstance to take as a starting-point was the underlying feeling that fate was against me, and that, in common wisdom, I had to put behind me all tempting dreams of ideal achievements. Anson received all this very impatiently. I could hardly tell from his abrupt protests whether he thought that it was not true or that it did not signify. He was quite sure it was irrelevant. Had I no positive, definite tastes or wishes? A man must have some life and purpose of his

own; let me say what I wanted to be at, and he would know how to advise, sympathize, or dissuade. I said, "Don't think of it as my difficulty only. I represent some thousands of living agents, free to choose for themselves what it is best for them to do; special, accidental determination is wanting, and surely that is no loss, seeing how often accidental ties hinder the individual from doing what could be best for himself and others. Is there nothing of which we can say, 'This is best in the abstract, and to be preferred, therefore, if circumstances grant us the luxury of choice'?"

The shadows of the willows across the stream were growing paler as we spoke; suddenly they vanished, but not as indicating the height of the eclipse; a column of fleecy cloud had risen from the east, and now began to cross the sun. In five minutes the zenith was overcast, and a darkness like that of early sunrise fell upon our path. As we turned into the highroad and began to ascend the hill, a sort of constrained silence fell upon us. The sun had now lost its dignity as well as its power; the filmy mist showed as plainly as a piece of colored glass the long crescent shape of divinity under a cloud, the silver arc slid like the moon between the drifts of brown vapor that seemed to hang half-way between the earth and the round masses of soft gray cloud which melted into white as they neared the sun. Body and mind shivered together.

I hardly know how much of the pros and cons that haunted my mind afterwards were explicitly discussed between us then: the very fact that I had looked forward to this conversation as a starting-point for more hopeful action made the chill of discouragement more crushingly complete, and I felt an insane readiness to take the innocent eclipse for an omen. I know I argued that it was absurd, in the face of the countless failures in each generation, to assume at starting that one's own life had a right to count upon success, and if not, was it anything but a folly to start burdened with hopes that were only so many empty packing-cases to hold the coming load of disappointment? On the other hand, if I put myself out of court altogether, and resolved to work only for my fellow-citizens, according to the cynic, "On a toujours assez de force pour supporter les malheurs d'autrui," and the probable disappointments met with here should be endurable; I admitted this would be an ungenerous calculation if it constituted one's real, sole motive; but Anson called himself a utilitarian, and I thought it was a valid argument that the greatest happiness of the greatest number must fare best if the greatest number adopt it consciously as the goal of their several efforts, instead of aiming only at their own happiness, which we know beforehand so many of them will miss.

But he would not have it so. Leaving my argu-

ment on one side, he insisted that I took an unhealthy and distorted view; whether the end pursued was one's own good or that of somebody else, the only sane and natural state was one of keen personal desire, an appetite for that particular good too real to be argued out of existence by the thought of its possible non-indulgence. I said that too is a form of happiness, to have before one the clear vision of a good attainable through one's own action, whether for one's self or another; but such blessings are rare. What right has one to claim or count upon such fortune for one's self? And I remembered, though I did not say, how in all dabbling with small social reforms I had felt the necessity of choking off one's inborn hopefulness and forcing one's self into content so long as action seemed to be going the right way, though the end of it was still hopelessly out of sight. And now the friend I loved and trusted, whose practical judgment of life and character had always seemed riper and wiser than mine, this friend takes the painful conclusions of my best wisdom and intentions and imputes them to me for sin or feebleness.

Meanwhile the sunlight was growing fainter, and the clouds seemed to spread into a thin smooth mist, which in its turn melted into space, and the blue-gray sky was clear again. We leant upon the top of a five-barred gate and looked back down upon the valley of the Isis. The whole plain was lost

in silvery mist, a gray cloud hung heavily over Oxford, and the only spot of light in the view was far off where a gleam of sunlight caught the passing smoke of the up express, just as sometimes, when the sky is almost wholly overcast at sea, one thin streak of red or yellow light glitters through the shadow midway to the horizon. I looked dreamily from the spray of flowering blackthorn that bent over the gate post to the dim wide prospect, and it seemed as if the living world was a very long way off. I do not know how long we stood in silence; it was one of those moments that seem as if they might last for ever without change, and then Anson's voice was heard, even and unimpassioned, as if still in the middle of a sentence: "The fact is, you ought to marry; it's exasperating to see a fellow with your sense wriggling like a contrary eel. Fall in love with a nice girl, and either take to a profession or write a book. Go into society, make friends, forget yourself and those nightmares about fated disappointment. Do what work you can; don't be always hanging back with some sickly apology that perhaps somebody else would do it better; and, for heaven's sake, don't think there is any saintly virtue in never doing anything you like!"

There is no describing the whirl of bewilderment that fills a single moment, when one feels a thousand things at once, and each several shock com-

bines with the others to swamp one's consciousness with a single comprehensive, overwhelming thrill of startled pain. Had I said something quite different from what I meant, or was he answering something quite different from what I had said? I kept silence and looked up. Did I say that the eclipse was annular? Overhead was to be seen a black ball with a silver line outside it, like a celestial bull's eye. I laughed aloud. It seemed an absurd mockery of human aspiration that Phœbus Apollo should glower at us with one blind eye at the moment when any hint or glimpse of light or mercy would have seemed, indeed, an oracle from heaven. Anson thought for a moment I was laughing at his advice; but when he, too, looked up, he owned that the awe of impending darkness was over. We gave one look round, shivered, came back to the road, and in easy talk of college matters strode homewards down the hill.

There are mistakes one does not make twice; but just because I was not going to risk my pleasant friendship on the rocks of quasi-theological debate, I felt inwardly the more bound not to disregard the chance of undiscerned truth lurking in what seemed to me the unsympathetic and superficial *Weltanschauung* thrust in my face by this unlosable friend. My thoughts dwelt on every word he had said, on every half-meaning I could imagine latent in his unspoken thoughts. Instead of dwelling on

the materials for self-justification, I turned advocate on the other side; it seemed so much better that I should have been egotistically stupid than that he should have failed in understanding kindness.

I say I have no divine right to a likable function in life; he says it is a disease of body or mind if one does not like the function which it is objectively best for one to discharge. But can there be a duty in liking? Is it possible that one's chance of doing a plain duty should hinge upon the luck which makes the accessible duties pleasant? And yet it is true also, as he contends, that there is virtue in the joyous fulness of objective life to feed the powers by which men do their best for the world. Week after week, month after month came and went, leaving me revolving in the same vicious circle of recurring moods, all colored by the same sense of emptiness and discouragement. Though I refused to complain of the need or abandon the attempt to endure to the end, to my feeling it *was* endurance, a prospect at which to set one's teeth and stiffen the muscles in stern preparation; and then I felt that such a mood, indeed, could not invite the tender sympathies of friendship. Is Anson himself nothing to me, that I should din into his ears the complaint that my life is all endurance, all hardship, that one can no more than endure? Why cannot I escape from the cramping sense of endurance and begin to achieve?

He does not understand that one should do any kind of uncongenial work for the benefit of others without the stimulus of sympathetic affection or personal desire. He calls it insanity to act without either love or liking, liking for the mere act or good-will towards the object. I say, God help the world if none can serve but those who love it! — and all the while I know that the intelligent acceptance of a rule is but a feeble motive in comparison with the spur of personal affection. The intention to do one's duty to one's neighbor is too wide; one must *want* to render concrete services to A and B. Victor Hugo's epigram on Cimourdain will bear extension: "On lui avait refusé une femme, il avait épousé l'humanité. *Cette plenitude enorme c'est au fond le vide.*"

I go over without bitterness all the common-sense reasons against my life (or yours) laying itself out on an exactly ideal plan. I am incapable of the half-mystical "trust that somehow good" will come to save one's soul without works or grace of one's own. Content is a subjective feeling, and may come either after victory or defeat, but not while the issue is uncertain, or, as is more often the case in peaceful daily life, when some of the possible issues are still regarded as evil, without therefore being the less likely to occur. My experience is all against any "unearned increment" of virtuous power, while Anson argues that the Methodistical doctrine

of "leadings" rests upon a sound induction. It is the inward impulse to seize a given opportunity which inspires action and gives to the result its providential character. But the question is this: every one has opportunities of acting somehow, and may use these opportunities better or worse; but is it certain that every one can have a selfish liking for the best actually in their reach? are opportunities certain to offer of themselves for the individual to do the best he can? or may it not rest with the judgment to inspire the initiative effort in the silence of congenial impulses?

If one aims at doing what one conceives to be right, is it any use torturing one's self about what one does or doesn't feel, like so many unconverted Evangelicals? I don't care, and don't want to care, for any of the goods of life; by nature I cared for very few, which I couldn't have, and after arguing myself out of the desire for what I used to want (in vain), I would rather not, even if I could, fall again under the sway of self-regarding wishes, running the same chances of distracting disappointment and stupefying indulgence. I should wish to be content to have no life of my own, to exist as an atom in the social machine, working without hunger or thirst, consuming nothing, and following without will of its own the "leadings" of adjacent springs. But if I lived forever, as, praised be the solar system! is not dangerous, I should have no selfish

delight in the function, for my inmost nature recoils from the invitation to be glad that other people care for such lives as would be hateful or intolerable to me. My friend says (and with some reluctance I believe him to be right), that one cannot discharge even the most mechanical function in the social body unless one feels with the impulses that direct the living atoms. And I do not feel *with* them, even when I feel very heartily *for* them. I cannot feel for myself as they do; I cannot wish so to feel, and though I could give almost my hopes of death to have an ideal towards which it was possible to strive, the best possible to me is not an ideal, but a calm, solitary stoicism, to which he gives much harder names.

It is human fate to have to struggle after something better than one is; but merely to wrangle with one's self for not being already other, seems a waste of force; and yet I wrangle and for the first time in my life doubt and dispute my own strongest mental instincts, because I cannot rest content without an ideal aim, safe from the blight of my friend's contempt.

The fact is, though I love my fellow-creatures dearly in the abstract, all concrete relations with them are so complicated with depressing difficulty, that I can hardly keep myself from feeling as if I disliked the relations. I never come in contact with people without wanting to act on them or

their circumstances; but perhaps they don't want to be acted on, or they want to act on me, or want *x* and *y* to act with or on them in quite a different direction. On the whole, I believe most of the things that I feel inclined to do might as well be done as let alone. I am sure I had better do some of them than nothing; but unless one is quite sure that the very thing one wishes to do one's self wants doing more than any other possible thing, one is apt to wait for encouragement or sympathy before one begins; and then again there is always a likely chance that the thing one is encouraged to do, if one meets with any encouragement at all, is the third best of the whole lot. And then one drifts back upon the knowledge — none the less certainly true because it is a sentence of death for such as I — that no particular good thing will be done by any one who has not a personal selfish desire prompting him to do just that. I have wasted the strength of my life in always trying to do some unprofitably distasteful thing. All my days have been spent in doing or trying to resolve to do what I disliked, and Anson seemed to make himself the mouthpiece of the world's unkindness in giving a verdict against me on this very ground. Not that I appeal against its justice. Where is the merit of a martyrdom that serves no creed? With chances to favor, I might have done something — it is useless to wonder how much or little — but that again was

what I hated to admit, that one's fate was in the hands of chance.

But I hated, too, the misplaced sympathy which congratulates you pleasantly on the pleasantness of an irksome task, and is ready to encourage your despair by auguries of undesired rewards and unattainable results. There is nothing more maddeningly discouraging than the suggestion of a friend, who, ignoring the impalpable sources of one's distress, points to imaginary prizes in the coming years: an author's fame, a happy marriage, or the like. If friendship's self can only hope to make the present bearable by the prospect of a future that will never be, that is a confession that the present is unbearable, not a help in bearing it. As a mere boy, I had hailed as deliverance the doctrine that it is wise and right to renounce, not to set one's heart on pleasure; it is a small thing as well as unattainable, — strength and virtue lie in being able to do without it. And so I lived, asking nothing, and not complaining when I got it. But this philosophy does not teach one what to do; and while I told myself and believed it was right to be able to do without pleasure, I did not think and feel it to be right or possible to do without action. And I sought the inspiration of friendship to tell me how to act. My friend answered, or so his words sounded to my soul's ears, "Act as you like, and like what other people do;" or perhaps it was,

"Like what other people do, and then you will act with them of your own accord;" anyway, translated into doctrine, the conclusion seemed to be that virtuous action was the natural fruit of unbought involuntary happiness, and that no good thing came from any other root. And I understood how people have called Calvinism a damnable creed; for by that, as by this, we are shown men and women, as it were alive, but a doom not of their own making holds them back from living rightly. That this was horrible gave no assurance that it should not be true, but if true it was a damnable, a damning truth. It seemed to be a light thing to give up happiness, but I did not care to give up my conscience too. Had only the fortunate a right to be good? was I to renounce the first fruits of my life's stern teaching and learn to wait upon Providence for luck that should inspire me with virtuous power?

I knew Anson did not argue thus, but where else was his reasoning to lead? I have two exorbitant appetites — to rule the wide world beneficently, and to have all my friends' best love. I feel the monstrousness of these pretensions, but if I choose to accept all or nothing, who has a right to blame my choice? We have each a double ideal. There is the self that one would have liked to be, and the self that one feels one might and ought to become. I would have triumphed if I could in and over the

world by nature; if that is denied me, shall I not triumph by grace over my own regret?

In point of orthodoxy there was little to choose between us; Anson swore by "Evolution," and I by a philosophy of my own, as yet imperfectly evolved; but the difference between us seems almost theological in character; so might a Calvinist and a Utilitarian Pelagian debate as to the duties of the unconverted. But Anson, when I hinted at the parallel, only accepted half of it.

"Exactly; there's an ascetic twist, as if one of your great-grandfathers had been a Trappist monk. What other good is there on earth but natural earthly happiness, and what have positive philosophers like you and me to do with transcendental visions of some hyper-sensible state of 'blessedness,' which, if you analyze it, must turn out a pure survival from states of thought which owed all their meaning to theological preconceptions that you accept as little as I do!"

Well, I had no special preference for the word "blessedness," but I thought Anson and his favorite philosopher rather missed sight of the motives which have led to the revival of its use by some fairly "positive" moralizers. Let us take some moment of extreme personal happiness. A long-sought-for discovery has been made, merit long denied has met with public recognition, a rival has been ignominiously defeated, a risky speculation has turned out

fortunately, a beloved bride has been won. Now in all these cases the feeling of personal delight may be equally intense, but a moralist, while admitting all alike to be happy after their own fashion, would only affirm those to be possessed of "true blessedness" whose happiness was compatible with the true good and gladness of others. Supposing the bride's consent has been extorted by domestic coercion, supposing the speculation to have succeeded by the ruin of honest traders, supposing the rival to have felt no evil passions, and to be pained and injured by his defeat, suppose the acknowledged merit to be spurious, and the imagined discovery an hallucination, the happiness remains the same at the moment, and in the worst cases there is least danger of its being cut short. But this is not blessedness. You may call it good luck if you think it such, but if there is any highest wisdom at all, any immaterial prize of righteousness, it must be something independent of good and evil chances, something that a man may conquer for himself out of the deepest abysses of calamity. If there is a supreme, impersonal divinity of right, if a man is *in love* with this divinity, and has vowed himself body and soul to its service, he may find in faithfulness to this his own ideal vision a source of satisfaction potent to outweigh even an acute sense of personal suffering, so that the righteous man may choose, and choose happily, his own pain rather than the surrender of a

wider good. Even of the elements of what we call personal happiness, many are external to ourselves, confer on us no direct pleasure or advantage, and it is only going a step further in the same direction to admit that under some circumstances the consciousness may prove to be most satisfactorily occupied with experiences that are in no sense self-regarding. It is a commonplace almost beyond dispute that men may sometimes be called upon to renounce their happiness if they would keep their hold on the eternal good; but it seems to me that there is yet a further step, and none but religious ascetics have dared to take it. I say we are called upon to recognize that the answer of a good conscience, the "blessedness" or content born of complete devotion to the highest Best, may prove to be as little in our reach as the ordinary good luck of earthly fortune. Any life would be worth living that could be spent in the service of the ideal best; but what if for some of us, for me myself, no ideal was possible or conceivable?

By the time I had got the problem clearly stated on this wise, I ceased to wonder that Anson had failed so much as to understand its terms, let alone the formula for its solution. And yet if there is no such fate, what did the old monk mean? "Magnum est et valde magnum, tam humano quam divino posse carere solatio, et pro amore Dei libenter exilium cordis velle sustinere, et in nullo se ipsum

quærere, nec ad proprium meritum respicere." To live for the love of good, cut off from all living, loving goodness, alike of gods or men, if there were no such damnation as this, why did the Apostle of the Gentiles challenge the doom as what he would risk to save his brethren's souls! But this is still to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness.

Anson was to have been married in May, and we did not meet again till the following autumn. The wedding had been put off on account of illness in the bride's family, and he had been spending all his spare time with them, so pretexts had not been wanting to help the postponement of an encounter that I dreaded. We met at last in an out-of-the-way court off the Strand, at a workingmen's meeting called to discuss an inconvenient technical consequence of some recent attempt at law reform. I was presiding, and had just finished a short introductory statement when Anson came in.

I asked him if he, as one "learned in the law," would speak next.

He said, "Presently;" and when the next orator was well started on an eloquent, unaspirated harangue, he whispered to me his congratulations on the part I was taking in this affair, and in one or others of the same inconspicuous sort; and added what was meant for an apology, "Afraid I was awfully uncivil to you in the spring, but it made me savage to see a fellow like you wasting his time

and spirits over cobwebs. More glad than anything to see you're all right now."

I laughed, and asked if it was a psychological axiom that a "chairman" never suffered from religious difficulties, and he took the query to be a jest. I did not think it necessary to explain that when I was first asked to preside at this meeting, I refused and suggested the name of a rising M.P., and that it was only at the eleventh hour, when the latter telegraphed an excuse, that I consented to take his place, when I had literally not five minutes to spare in which to invent a speech. According to Anson's ideas, nothing could well be less sane or more perverse than to decline the opportunity of making a good speech and then submit to the necessity of making a bad one. However, the very completeness of the *malentendu* encouraged me to renew our interrupted intercourse. I was safe against inconveniently keen discernment.

He offered to bet the fees of his last case (a big one that was sure to go to the House of Lords) that before another seven years were out, I should be as well pleased with myself, the world, and the one woman in it, as he was now.

It is impossible to dislike a man at the moment when he is giving you the strongest expression he can of his good-will; the feeling of horror, even disgust, which seized me irresistibly, as I listened to him, was altogether impersonal. I thought then

that my rage was righteous. I felt as if a brutal suggestion had been made to me, and I justified the exaggerated resentment by taking it as an accusation, as if I for one should care no more for the common lot of men if only my own hearth were warm. But the resentment was too venomous to be wholly just, and I have thought since that I might have been less angry if I had not felt the augury to be ill-judged. He did not in his heart accuse me of the kind of selfishness I could repudiate aloud; he only credited me with some of the common qualities of our kind in which I felt myself to be wanting. I thought it was his duty as a friend to have understood that little short of a miracle was needed to secure me the private felicity he promised with so light a heart. And because I could not resent this misconception as bitterly as I felt it, I resented all the more the cognate assumption that, if I were thus consoled, the remaining wretches of the same order would be too few to count.

I was helped to this discovery by another experience on which this is not the place to dwell. Suffice it to say that complaints very like my own were made to me by a comparative stranger just at this time. I was careful to avoid the rock of offence upon which I had stumbled so painfully, and I said nothing to encourage visionary hopes; but, as kind luck would have it, I was able to bring my client within reach of the needed chances for his own

life's growth, and with this change in the environment his mood changed too for the brighter. I had a pleasant letter from him, acknowledging the change, and expressing a hope that he was not therefore going to forget the doomed many, in whose lot no change for the better could be made. He added that the unexpected help was doubly valuable to him, both as a personal advantage and as an answer to the troublesome problem whether help might come from man to man in the time of need. I had just read and answered this letter, and was revolving in my mind the bearing on the general problem of the corresponding truth, that help also might *not* come from man to man in the time of need, when a telegram was brought me.

It was February. Anson had been married the beginning of December, and travelled straight south to Naples; he wrote to me from Amalfi, and then from Rome; all went merrily as marriage-bells. There was a new tone of tenderness here and there in his letters which reconciled me to the volleys of jubilant rapture which he felt it due to friendship to fire off every few weeks. The last letter warned us to expect him home in March. I opened the telegram without thought of harm. It was from an Italian doctor at Perugia. Anson was dying of fever and had bid him send for me. There were thirteen minutes left in which to catch the night mail; the cabman drove furiously, and I just had

time to throw myself into the guard's van without a ticket, before the moving train had left the platform. In fifty hours I was at Perugia. He still breathed; three hours before he had asked for me, and they took me to his room at once. His eyes were open, but with a strange look. I tried to speak his name cheerily; slowly a feeble look of recognition broke over the changed features. He whispered, "Thanks," — a gasping space between each word — "Thanks — old boy — for coming." Then his hand moved faintly, and with yet more effort, as I bent over him to catch every breath — "Take care of her." The next moment she was a widow and I had lost my friend.

The sad slow homeward journey ended upon the anniversary of that accursed eclipse. Need you ask why, from that day to this, I have never asked myself, nor willingly let another ask, any question bearing upon the share of Fate and Right in ruling the life and determining the duties of men? And from that day to this I have had a superstitious horror of the Evil Eye as I see it sometimes in dreams, a black, sightless ball, with a narrow silver rim, watching with blind, baleful stare the far-off struggles of a human soul.

. . . . . .

Postcript by the Master. — I asked Egerton to write the above, one day when we had been talking of young men's intellectual difficulties. He

referred to these difficulties of his, and I found so much difficulty in understanding them that I asked him, in pure curiosity, to write them out for me at length, as his contribution to our volume of disguised confessions. Either I am stupid, or the written statement is hard to follow; and as I am guilty of getting the riddle inserted here, perhaps I ought to add what little I can in explanation. I think the chief trait in Egerton's character was something that I can only describe as a conscientious wilfulness. He wanted to do right, but it must be a right of his own choosing, and he never felt as if he had done enough *original* right to be worth having. It was true, and a thing that troubled his friends, that his life did seem always partly wasted, less productive than it should have been considering his real ability, perseverance and unselfishness. As one follows his argument, one is vexed with what seems like a shifty perversity, a determination to have always some unanswerable reason for making himself miserable; but now that we have lost him, in looking at his life by the light of this, in itself sufficiently undecipherable key, I seemed to understand him better than while he lived and we persisted in expecting from him the performance that did not come. He asked for a theoretical solution of difficulties that only admitted of a practical solution, which he always just missed. It is a fact, a simple fact of observation, needing no

more explanation than young Martin's broken leg, that the prosperous contented man died young, that one uncomfortable youth was helped to a career by a good-natured stranger, and that the unhelped helper, who was uncomfortable too, did a score of things middlingly well, but always just fell short of excellence or supreme efficiency. He had a high standard and knew he failed to reach it. He chose to consider his modest, useful life a failure, and I think his friends judge more kindly in saying he failed than in saying, "What right had he to judge himself by so high a standard?" I think his character had enough elements of greatness in it to justify him in resenting the friendly suggestion that he was no worse than his neighbors, and should be content to know it. For him it was a failure to be no better than they.

His weakness — he himself was capable in later years of seeing that it *was* a weakness — lay in this: He was not by nature so much in sympathy with any one external tendency or so much in love with any single outer aim as to feel his whole nature satisfied by the effort to co-operate with the one or attain the other. And as the world is wide enough for all vigorous human passion to find or make itself a field therein, this imperfect adaptation of a too fastidious soul to its surroundings is and stays a defect, albeit a defect that calls for more pity than blame. It calls for pity the more because

patient and pitying wisdom may not prove powerless to supply to the young groaners in eclipse some foot or hand hold whence they may struggle into possession of the missing aim or motive.

As to Egerton, "*Requiescat in pace.*" He preached the courage he did not feel, and left his part of the world a shade the better for his passage through it.

X.

The Shadow of Death.

Let not my love be called idolatry.

—SHAKSPEARE

X.

HE had been dead a year and three days. Two years ago we were married. One of the vows we spoke as married lovers said that each day and hour of our life should add something to the force and tenderness of our wedded love. I asked him for the vow, saying love seemed to grow less if it only stayed the same: one feels less the feeling one has got used to; and he said, Yes, but a growing love grew dearer when it had been growing long. For that short year we kept our vow unbroken, unforgotten, and then I was left alone, alone, alone, with the ghostly memory of a short year's moments to defy the grim presence of interminable years of life to come.

I fled from every one at once. I was thankful I had no child. Every face and voice were hateful to me; every word they spoke seemed to scream to me, "All love has left the world with him." They spoke as if they had never loved, never loved even him, nay, as if they neither knew nor guessed what love might be. If they had known, surely they would have left me to mourn in peace. I fled; I

sought a prison where none could follow. Money will buy even that, and in this convent by the sea the nuns do not think it strange that one should kneel all day before an unseen presence, and weep and still kneel weeping.

After the first long months my tears fell more for him; waking in the night, waking at dawn, I thought what it must be for him to wake and find himself alone. For me it had always been enough to know that he was happy, either with me or apart; but to him no happiness was possible unshared. The sun is shining to-day; if it were not for the peasants' vineyards I could wish the storms were back again. I hate the light he does not see. My heart is sore for my dead love's sore desolation. They talk of the *jour des morts* and a life beyond the grave; I think I could bear my own life if I thought Charlie were too dead to miss me; but I feel as if love could not die, as if, whatever else was dead, the aching pain at his heart must last as long as my heart aches with lonely love.

The convent stands on a promontory; the church and bell-tower are a landmark to the sailors; the convent garden has a level terrace walk leading to the churchyard, and there are hours in the day, when the nuns and school-girls are at their duties, that I have the garden to myself. I pace up and down, gazing blankly into the formless void. The world is empty when one has nothing left to lose.

One can always be alone, too, by kneeling in the little church. The visitor of the convent is a high ecclesiastic. I had met him in the world, and I told him I would live for months or years at the convent if he would see that no one ever spoke to me of my creed or theirs, or the grief that sent me to this shelter. He has kept faith, and I endure the village priest's kind benedicite.

Can it be that I was a faithless or unhappy wife? I try in vain to conjure up the image of my own lost bliss. Surely I loved him and was blessed in his dear love, and yet I cannot feel as if I had a loss of my own to weep for. It is Charlie's life, strong, bright and joyous, as we traced its course in thought; that is what I have lost, the loss for which my tears fall still. I was four-and-twenty when we met, and had never thought of love or marriage. I heard people say it was not good to live alone, but I was not alone in the large ever-widening circle of a merry marrying family. I had never thought of wishing for the happiness of love in marriage for myself; it seemed there were so many wanting it, I had no right to claim such a lot before so many others with a better claim to it than I. Indeed, when Charlie came to see us, I never thought it was for me he came, and I was slow to understand or be persuaded that he claimed me with a love that had a right to the best answer I could give.

Surely I loved him; why else did the world end for me with his death? And yet my heart seems cold, as if my very love were dead as well. Grief seems to choke me, and yet I cannot grieve, because it seems to me a little thing, among the million sorrows of the poor, the anguish mixed with wrong and shame, the cruel losses through which other wrong is wrought, it seems a little thing by the side of these that the joy of my one life is dead. It was not to win love's joy that I let my life unite with his; one must answer to a call; and now there is silence everywhere, and in the dull heartlessness of my grief, it seems to me that it is not his love I mourn and miss; it is the sweetness of the voice calling on me for love. Who is it says that —

> Youth is blest
> Because it has a life to fill with love?

I am not old even now, and shall I fill my life with love of that lost blessedness? Though I asked for nothing, that sweet voice came to me: shall I have learnt from it only to ask angrily in vain? The memory is mine; it is not a small thing, that and my constant soul bound together like lovers in a first embrace, — Oh, the memory of his first kiss! — that memory and I will live unflinchingly through all the years, and we shall die undivided when I go to rest with him.

. . . . . .

An old lay sister died this week, and has been buried to-day. It was May when I wrote last, and October finds me still here, alone with the sad memories that are turning to reproach. Those unexplained last words of his: "I leave it all to you," — they thought he meant the land — as if he or I could have thought of that at the last hour of parting. I have thought again and again of the trust those words conveyed, and no meaning ever joined to them till now. I thought perhaps he meant rest was for him, he left the pain and grief to me; but the slow months bring understanding, and I think he meant that the life we thought was his was left to me, and to me he left the doing, the causing to be done, all we had planned together that he should do to justify his life. In a book of his I found this passage marked with an index finger: —

> "You may learn to know yourself through love, as you do after years of life, whether you are fit to lift them that are about you, or whether you are but a cheat, a load on the backs of your fellows. The impure perishes, the inefficient languishes, the moderate comes to its autumn of decay; these are of the kinds that aim at satisfaction, to die of it soon or late. The love that survives has strangled craving; it lives because it lives, to nourish and succor like the heavens. But to strangle craving is indeed to go through a death before you reach your immortality."

My love is not dead; it has turned into a hungry craving. I thought I loved him purely, and I grieve that he no longer needs my love. All the springs of human feeling dried up in me when he died. For longer than our married life, half as long again as my whole life's share of happiness, I have lived in selfish, barren solitude. At first I wondered, could this last forever? As the days and months passed, it seemed there was no force to end it. I had no force to question, was it right? What was the use of asking, though it were wrong, was anything else so much as possible?

Is anything else possible? I dwell apart from the little cares and brawls of the convent life, and standing thus apart, the stillness and the peace, the remoteness from the eager life of towns, the near presence of the church and graveyard — it seems so short a step from the nun's cell to the bier on which the old lay sister sleeps, while the psalms are chanted round her — all this reminds me of an early longing for something like a cloister, where a sad laity could take vows not quite like those of Christendom. I could not take these sisters' vows, even if I shared all their faith. It is too easy; it is seeking a coward's ease to build walls and bar the windows against the world's wickedness, and then, like raw troops grown bold in garrison, rail at the enemy who challenges us to conflict in the field. I want a cloister whose walls are faithfulness and its bars love, a fortress

invisible and present everywhere, a refuge from the world's temptations, and one's own soul's hungry craving, the craving whereby the cunning world tempts to angry, covetous discontent.

The world has robbed me of my love; can I take a vow of loving service to the cruel world? Can one wish to return good for such an utter evil? The love that has "strangled craving," that is stronger than death or any other distance, can live without happiness; but can love prosper a whole lifetime widowed of perfect joy? The perfect love gives everything and receives everything, without thought or effort, almost without consciousness of desire. But how are the affections of the heart to remain ever tender and responsive, so strong and ready as to give their own tone and color to the whole of life, if the self-abandonment of answered love is made impossible forever, if at every turn the feeling must be checked that grows unchecked into an exacting clamor, a cry after the answer that does not come?

I suppose there is still too much self-seeking self-assertion, too little disinterested love, while one has the feeling of such check. In regard to him, I never felt the room for any check or chill, not only because I had his love: I felt, whether or no, that he must have had mine, and that only to love is blessedness enough, divinely more than enough. If one loved others with as pure a tenderness, there

would be no painful sense of self-repression or repulse. I cried yesterday because a little black-eyed baby in the convent school cried when I stooped to kiss her; but it was not to give the child pleasure that I stooped; it was to feel once more the nearness of some human love. I was not thinking of the child, rather, already, before I knew it, the question was framing itself in my thought: — One cannot live without love; can one live without the joy of love, which is not to be loved again, but that the beloved one should be blessed in our love? My beloved lives still, — he lives in my unchanging love, but oh! the impotance of mortal loving! What profit has he in the silent grave? I am desolate, and the sad faithfulness avails him nothing. Would God I too were dead! Can one live, I was asking, when love itself grows barren at the icy face of death?

And even now I answer, without haste and after listening to every doubtful pause: — This, too, is possible. Married love and the passionate friendship which is as the marriage of twin souls, these are the first open gates; the way of salvation leads plainly through them, and the flames that dart across the portal and fasten consumingly upon the selfish lusts of those who would pass through the gates have not much terror for the blest elect who enter hand in hand. But there is another gate, narrow, obscure, to which each one draws near

alone, and the path to it is through the valley of the shadow of death. We tread barefoot and the stones are sharp, we fall, the ground is a flame, the air is a suffocating smoke, invisible demons ply their scourges, the burden of lost gladness is a crushing weight. There is one strange pleasure in the agony, — to feel sharp flames consuming what was left in us of selfish lust; and there is one pain passing all the rest, — to feel the same flame fasten thirstily upon our every wound, within, without, and consume the very pain, as if that too was sin.

The path is long through the dark and winding hollow; who knows if we shall live to reach the end, where is the gate of religious love, and few there be that find it? But that fierce trial can teach as much as the sacramental mysteries of twice-blessed love; and it is lawful for each of those who have followed the divine teaching to the end to feel that no other lesson could have been so full of deep instruction for themselves. God forbid I should blaspheme the sacredness of the love that was once his life, because the gladness of it is now turned to a spreading desolation. Only to me this death is not the end of life, rather the beginning of a life-long worship, and this too is a way of salvation. Desire is past; what could he desire at my hands? He has passed from me, out into the unseen, unfelt world, upon whose bidding I would wait in meek obedience. It is as if I and my God were alone in

the infinite space; the void world is not too wide for a devout enclosure, and it is there my vows are to be paid.

It is not laid upon all as a duty, but it is lawful to a few when the necessity befalls to dwell in the world, in the bright, wholesome, sunlit world — in it but yet not of it. When the world's best has vanished from the body's sight, it is lawful, nay, it is good, a high and blessed privilege, to cleave for evermore to the lost divine invisible love, to worship and adore the dear unseen, rather than quench the spirit of faithful renunciation and seek scraps of feeble consolation among the so-called goods of earthly life. Good indeed and in truth for those who are born to find their own good there; but to the spouse of a heavenly love, false and mocking shadows, a feeble mimicry of the true inalienable spiritual inheritance that remains for ever to solace those who are faithful in bereavement.

. . . . . .

There are two sisters in this convent and there is one priest in the adjoining town whose faces are like a sermon on the poetry and the meaning of the religious life. The refined, exalted expression of spiritual "detachment" from the momentary interests of life is a permanent but not an exclusive characteristic of the countenance. Interest, concern, sympathetic alarm or pleasure, kindness, deference, amusement sometimes, and sometimes even indig-

nation, appear on the sweet face in their due turn, without prejudice to the lasting dominant air of absorption in the unseen world, as if the true "religious" had lived face to face with the embodied eternal realities of human life, as if the personal life had been lived out alone with the unchanging divine and spiritual essences; and then, for love of the divine in God and man, they consent to live again, without personal life of their own, among the mixed and impure lives of the myriads in whose personal life the divine element is so faint, so feeble, so fragmentary, so inseparably entangled with base and earthly matter, that few among them can recognize its divinity unaided, and fewer still be brought to apprehend the glory of a life that should be all divine.

The Catholic Church was not far from the truth in its recognition of the two vocations outside the doom of sinful failure. There is the secular ideal, reached or sought by men like my own lost Charlie; natural, prosperous human lives, spent in doing willingly naturally good, self-chosen work, in the beneficent, enjoyable exercise of power, in the delightful indulgence of beneficent desires. The earthly paradise is when such souls as these live in unbroken unity together. But earth is not Paradise, and some who have seen the gates of heaven open have seen them open only to close behind all that made their heaven on earth. And for others they

have not opened at all; the natural life is dull and mean and mischievous. And alone, near and yet apart from both the others, the religious life follows its calm, strong, unvarying course — a life that spends itself in joyful worship of the living good, in sad, devout commemoration of the good that has been living, that lives now only in its fruitful memories, and the sad devotion born of loss and worship, and in faithful, patient strife against the tyranny of evil nature, in loyal championship of the feeble tribes, the scattered units who cling feebly through oppression to a worthier birthright. Thus rich, thus varied, thus fed by nature, outlined and sustained by the chronic necessities of human life and labor, the religious life follows its solitary course, — alone, yet not alone, engaged at every turn in the countless interests of unnumbered daily lives, but with the deepest inner consciousness of the soul consciously possessed by something else than the personal care for these succeeding acts of faith or hope or charity; possessed, namely, by the overmastering, undying passion of adoring love for the spiritual source and centre, the conceived impersonation of the divinely wise and tender power in whose strength alone the worshipper goes forth to conquer and to die, — to die the living death of those who live by faith, the life of the immortals which is death to man, instead of by sight, by the very beatific vision of an incarnate good, which

overshadows blessed life by the impending shadow of a personal death.

. . . . . .

I am driven to say all this more plainly to myself than I had wished by the insistence of kind friends — kinder than wise I think them, and one is apt to feel unwise kindness as a cruelty. They scold me, with gentle sympathy, it is true, for giving up the world, my friends, and duties in it, to live alone here with an idle memory. Do they think I would have done this *if I could have done otherwise?* Now, it is not because of their kind moralities, nor because I see new light upon the path of duty, that I feel the hour for some change is at hand. There is a duty owing to the deepest feelings of the heart. If we feel it possible to obey their silent urging, impossible *not* to wait and follow in submission, who shall dare to say that we and the irresistible impulse are wrong and blameful? The passion that possesses us wholly, body, soul and spirit, mind, will and conscience, all at once has a right to rule us as it does and must, and to resist the promptings of such passion at the bidding of remembered platitudes is like sinning against the Holy Ghost within us; it is a lie against our own soul's truth, of which the fruit is that worst damnation, the silencing of the soul's native voice, banning the sinner to drift rudderless through the remaining days.

My friends say, is it not an indulgence of the

selfishness of grief that holds me here alone? They say, though he is gone, are there none left that need your love? I listened silently; I did not choose to answer sternly: "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," and who is such a stranger as a mere good friend to the mystery of its joy and grief? Have I said — I hardly care to say, because it would have hurt my Charlie's soul to hear — that in losing him my most utter loss was the losing one who could not live without my love? For his sake I could have surrendered all the rest; but that one worst loss had to be borne. I am alone; the others can do without me: — for you see they have. One cannot even wish to cease to feel this desolation as a pain. One loves all the same, and chooses, since it must be so, to have that pain to bear; it takes all one's strength to bear it without bitterness. And then kind friends break in with warning voice: "You are wasting your love upon a memory; he needs it not; do you go and love those who need."

O Charlie! they are cruel! Charlie! if any knowledge could haunt you now, would you not know it is my hardest grief that the love I bear to you is fruitless for your good? But, my love, my love! is the fault of that in me? Should I not have served you with eager faithfulness and glad devotion through a life of love if fate had left you in my arms? Who dares to reproach the stricken victims of the pitiless death? Let the rest find their happi-

ness where they may; what have I done that they should call on me to go out into the highways and hedges and beg amongst the starving beggars for a pauper mate, because the king has no profit from his subjects' love? Let those who must or may love once, or twice, or thrice, let their happiness be born again when it is dead, but earth held only one joy for me, and that is dead, and my love still worships at its tomb. Though my love himself came back to chide me, I could say no other than that I do well to love and worship mournfully.

There is but one love to which, without faithlessness, the widowed soul may be abandoned with the boundless self-abandonment of the one sole, infinite, unrenewable passion — the love of the infinite, impersonal, spiritual divinity, the passionless calm of infinite truth, the ideal of perfect wisdom, strength and mercy, which we see as in a glass darkly, when a noble human soul casts its shadow on the troubled stream of life. It may be that without this fleeting vision of the God in man I had been left godless in the lonely world. But to have seen once is to love for ever, and all the pure goodness that I loved in him is with me now as a God immortal, adorable, and present everywhere. He lives in God, God lives in him; my life is hid in the worship and the love of God in him.

. . . . . .

He had plans of what we and our children should

do. He said it took two generations working together to do the best that might be. But I am widowed, and no child of his is with me. He said, playing reproachfully with my lack of high ambition, that I was born to be the mother of great sons, "or," he added, "great daughters, which will be more original." And yet no child of his is with me. It was always my delight to believe his jesting words; he laughed in kindness, and his kindness fulfilled many prophecies. Can the dead work miracles, and the barren widow be a joyful mother of children? Charlie! Love is cruel as the grave, and instead of peaceful sorrow you bid me seek the trembling pain, the heart-sick, helpless longing of the mother who has the power to bring forth — who is there that cannot bring forth *something?* — but has so little strength to bequeath along with the doubtful boon of life, that she sees, with the second sight of love, her feeble offspring struggling vainly with the world it cannot mend or master because of its feebleness, or rather hers who gave it no better strength. Is it not so with mothers? The child and the anxious pain and grief are theirs; how little of the triumph — if it came — would they dare to call their own? Only the mother's pang, without which this place would have been left for another to fill. Less well? Then we have not lived in vain.

I cannot do your will, my own, but as I go through the wilderness, the piercing voice of an-

guish crying aloud, and calling in the name of our love, "Let his good will be done," here, and here, thus and now, — this voice crying in the wilderness will touch some ears, it may be, and what I cannot do for you, my love, myself, may yet be done at the long last by many who will scarcely know why or whence the call has come to them. My life is ended, yet I am not dead. I am a voice crying in the wilderness, calling to the living from the sanctuary of the dead, "My children, my children! do the will of the blessed who are gone, and a double blessing will be upon your love and on your lives."

. . . . . .

Still the months went by. I knew that light and guidance would come, were coming, to me; it was mine to wait. There was one sweet-faced girl from the convent school who wished to take the veil, and she had a friend who, half for company, thought that she too had a vocation. The latter had rich parents, and a hopeful marriage ready arranged for the completion of her eighteenth year. I had come to know these girls well, and they told me of their innocent young dreams and longings. I was not in haste to leave the convent, for no one else in reach could or was likely to tell these children all that I could. I spoke freely of the difficulty of the religious life, translating all that makes its rightful charm into the orthodox language of the cloister. I think they understood. Both grew to feel a girlish fond-

ness for the English stranger, and I think it was not without my help that one consented to do her parents' bidding and seek her mission in the world, while the other with open eyes chose the strenuous peace of cloistral vows.

I waited for her profession. The service is sad to those who think that the young life might be better spent, but it is a pretty and a touching thing to see a young soul dare to vow eternal faith to the divine ideal; and I, who hold as strongly a very different creed from theirs, chose nevertheless to let that service stand as the symbol for one more profession than the sisters guessed. I knelt unseen in an outer chapel, and one by one my vows went up with hers.

When all was over a solemn stillness seemed to fill the air. For the last time I paced the terrace walk alone that evening; a row of cypress trees edged either side, like black spires shooting into the blue overhead, and between these grim sentinels pink roses flowered against the foliage of newly budding lemon trees. The air was still, and the sun had already sunk behind the mountain shoulder. There were no clouds overhead, and the line of sea and sky was clear, but above the sea a low line of curling cloud, like the level smoke from a giant steamer, lay motionless along the horizon, and the setting sun dyed it a deep, luminous, rose red. And the coast line opposite grew to a deeper and deeper rosy red; cliffs and woods were bathed in crimson,

the little fishing-boat had a crimson sail, and something strange, like a rosy veil, seemed cast over the stillness of the blue sky and sea. The transparent light was like the ruby glow of a summer sunlit dewdrop. The glory and the peace were supreme; it was the crowning moment of the day's rich beauty. I had watched the crimson deepening to the last; it had not yet begun to fade; it seemed to me the hour had come.

I rose and crossed the terrace without a backward glance. I sought my convent room, and that same night were written the letters pledging me to return. The next day's dawn found half my luggage packed for England, and in three days more the convent grating was a memory, the wide enclosure of the world a present truth of sense. And the deep crimson glow of that sunset scene lives on for ever in my thought undimmed, like the undimmed memory of deathless love.

XI.

Sat est Virisse.

The day is short and the work is great. It is not incumbent upon thee to complete the work, but thou must not therefore cease from it.

—TALMUD.

XI.

"I SAY, Philo, how is it that most people's lives somehow don't seem to come to much?"

The question began with a rush and ended rather hesitatingly, as if the problem, which had been occupying the speaker's mind for at least ten minutes, did not appear quite as large, when reduced to words, as he had expected. There was a deprecating fall in the boy's voice which disarmed severity; besides, he is the son of one of my best and oldest friends, and I answer to the name of "Philo" in token that I have accepted the *rôle* of guide and philosopher which he has been pleased to assign me; — partly, I suspect, with a view to combining the requisite modicum of respect with an epithet of handy brevity and a comfortably familiar sound.

It was Sunday; we had been for a walk over the downs, and were resting on the steep sloping summit. Lying on one's back one looked up into the deep blue of a cloudless May sky; a faint hum of insects broke the silence at intervals, or was drowned by the note of a distant bird; a light wind neither cold nor hot, but soft like the touch of a

child's hand, blew through one's hair and played with the blades of grass and tiny gold and violet flowers of the short-cropped turf as the broad winds play upon the waving cornfields, scattering lights and shadows in a dreamy network. On one side there was a glimpse of blue sea cut by the green slope below us. We had thrown ourselves upon the grass to rest, but there is a difference between sixteen and sixty, and Johnny's mind having been more active than mine, the result delivered itself as above.

We were staying at the house of a rather distinguished political personage, and the night before several ex-celebrities had been brought together in a kind of family *réunion*, early friendships or cross marriages supplying the link when there was no actual relationship. The dinner had been one of those social successes which are growing more and more rare, so that I was curious to know why my young friend's impressions should have been of the *vanitas vanitatum* order. It appeared presently that the disappointment did not begin with the public conversation of the great men; the dinner had been delightful — "at least," he went on, "it was delightful to me; but most of the men were thirty or forty or fifty years older than I am, and I thought I should like to go on talking like that for ten years or so. But then one would have talked about everything, and I shouldn't like to go on saying the same thing; and when Lord —— was talking to

me this morning he *did* say the same things that Mr. —— had said the day before yesterday at breakfast, and it wasn't for the sake of making talk to me, because he stuck to it after I had begun to ask questions about something else. And Mr. *** was just the same; they all seemed content to talk about things as if they had nothing to do with making them happen; and the things that they do talk about doing, and care about a great deal more than I could, all seem so small, so far away from the things their best talk makes one feel like caring about a great deal; and what I mean by its all coming to nothing is that *they* don't seem to care now, and if I do, it's only — they all three as good as said so — it's only because I'm a boy. When I'm as old as they are I shall care as little and have done as little too; for, after all, I couldn't help thinking that they had all given up caring because it was no use; they could never do all they wanted; and as they all started meaning to be great men, when they found they couldn't do what they wished, they turned round and tried to make other people wish for what they could do, and so went on doing middle-sized things without caring much." And not yet out of breath, the boy proceeded to substantiate his indictment by some personal illustrations, never very hard to find, of the discrepancy between the young ambitions of divers men of the time and their mature achievements.

I intimated that sweeping criticism was an easy and an idle task; it was for the rising generation to achieve more if it could. But this the boy declared to be a subterfuge unworthy of myself: "For what I like in you, Philo, is that you never snub a fellow in that way, talking as if one could never do any good now because it isn't a dozen years hence. Of course you are a walking wet-blanket and all that sort of thing, but then your cold water," he was pleased to say, "takes the form of making one feel everything worth doing so tremendously fine and great that it is too difficult — one has no chance of getting through with it; and that's quite different from the feeling that it is foolish to care at all because one can't do anything big enough to be worth caring for. And then if one says anything like this to people who used to care and don't now, they look wise and say, 'Wait a few years, and then' — And then, *I* say, if I end by not caring either, does that make it any better? Doesn't it make things all the worse if one generation after another begins the same way to end alike, beginning with mistaken zeal to end in contented failure?"

There was nothing very novel in the boy's confused account of his first impression of disenchantment with the world's "distinguished names." But it brought back to me some of those questions which it is usually the last act of expiring youth to

put on one side, which it is the triumph of successful middle age to bury in oblivion, but which, after all, it seems can only be kept out of sight for less than half a lifetime. I had been much given at one time to asking myself, *Does* it all come to much? and though, for reasons of my own, I dropped the question about the same time as most men, I always retained a kind of sympathy for boys and men who have the courage of their foolishness, and refuse to ape the virtuous content to which their young souls are strangers. Somehow a bachelor always seems to be thought of as a youngish man until he is unmistakably an old one, and to this day I feel more sure that the young Irreconcilables who make a confident of me may easily live to be wiser than I am now, than that I am already so very much wiser than they (and I needn't say they humor the belief).

There are some things that one gets to know by the mere fact of living long enough, but very few people are able to spend all their time in learning and none in forgetting. An idle man who has sat loose to practical affairs has a chance of acquiring his worldly wisdom so superficially that its lessons need not quite efface the naïve first impressions of earlier days; and so perhaps I was born to mediate between Johnny's frank severity and the self-satisfied wisdom of his elders.

There is surely something to be said on both sides.

The young hardly allow for the intense *difficulty* — material and unromantic difficulty — of choosing an admirable course, and pursuing it with sure feet. The old are apt to see shallow scorn and ignorant irreverence in blame which has its truer motive in respect for ideals still unmissed. But, as I think slightly of the senile wisdom that cannot be communicated to a younger understanding, I wished to rehearse for Johnny's benefit a few of the reasons why it is fair to judge men by their attempts as well as by their achievements, and why, even in youth, it is as well not to set the whole heart too fondly on the attempt at achievements in which we may fail without guilt of our own.

I said: "Is it reasonable to ask of life that it should always be 'coming' to something different from the living moment that is? The moments that interest us most in life and attach us to it most do not hang together like the parts of a syllogism; our living interest is in the elements, not in the whole they form at last; and perhaps that is why those who have not yet lived through those thrilling moments are least ready to accept the moments as themselves the crown of life. But we will talk of this again upon the island."

Johnny had been a privileged visitor at the castle since he was nine years old, and the next September, just after his birthday, I reminded the Master that he was entitled to initiation as an "old

friend" now, for I wanted to know whether the "Vignettes" would leave the same kind of impression on his mind as the conversation of cabinet ministers. For two or three mornings he kept away from us, reading them seriously alone; then I met him returning the volume to the tower, and as he followed me silently to the observatory roof, I asked in his own words, "Well, what does it all come to?"

He was still grave, silent for nearly two minutes, and at last asked, "May I say just what I think?" To do him justice, he seldom pauses for permission, and I nod encouragement, but he still hesitates before beginning a slow reply: "Well, I hardly know, you see, if it were all true, — but of course, even if it isn't true, it might be — I think that's just it. I've read all the reminiscences straight through, and I feel at the end just as I did that day on Beachy Head when you pulled me up for saying most people's lives didn't seem to come to much. What *does* it all come to? I understand that there is a difference between talking or thinking about things and living through them, and that if one feels one is living the right life for one's self, one needn't be able to make one's feeling into something like the answer of a conundrum. But — you won't mind my saying? — I do think the clever people who have lived through a real life ought to be able to tell us, who have hardly begun,

whether we shall think it's worth doing when it's done, or whether that depends on how we do it; and if so, which is the way they would try, 'if,' as they're so fond of saying, 'I had my time to come over again.' You and I now," and here he looks me ingenuously in the face, — "I feel as if you ought to know just everything I want to be told. I don't say you ought to be able to answer any or every body, but, on your honor as a philosopher, *am* I so stupid that you can't tell me what you feel in phrases that one can understand in less than a quarter of a century?"

It was a fair challenge, and I promised the boy that my long-delayed contribution to the castle records should consist in no ambiguous passage of romance, but in a few senilities on the ancient theme, "*Sat est vixisse.*"

The question that all young people want to have answered beforehand is, "What had I better do with my life, and what am I likely to meet with in it to enjoy and to endure?" Perhaps good advice would be less unwelcome than it often is if those who gave it avowed at the outset that it is likely enough to be unpleasant to take; that the fullest knowledge of what might be best to do in any crisis goes little or no way towards making it naturally easy or desirable to do that best. I, at all events, will not tempt you to hear me by any hope or promise that I am going to prophesy smooth things.

At starting, I find it very difficult to innovate in substance upon the commonplaces accepted by good folks before me. I have often been amused at myself for having arrived, slowly and by devious routes, at elaborately expressed conclusions, which, as soon as they got finally stated, turned out to be a mere paraphrase of the moral platitudes from which my mind wished to emancipate itself at first. However, here is a safe rule to begin with. I do not know in which form it is most likely to be acted on, but you may have it in the farthest fetched. The younger you begin to act on it the better; it is never too young.

In the moments, however short, when there is nothing that you wish to do, and nothing that you are obliged to do, do not wait and wish for wishes to arise; spend the interval in cultivating, by preference a talent, or, if you can lay your hand on none, at all events without fail a faculty. The odds are overwhelming that any acquisition will come in useful some time, and in any case the power of working without the stimulus of desire, the habit of working whenever you have nothing better to do, are themselves among the most valuable of acquisitions. I do not say that you should force your nature into wholly uncongenial efforts; no good is done against the grain, and there must be some knots and knobs in all our scaffolding; but we may train the young growing wood as we please, and

we cannot make up our minds too soon as to the supreme desirability of growing strong and straight, and as tall as we can without risking a feeble stoop.

But the advice sometimes asked for is of a sort that in the nature of things cannot be given. Such questioning as this: What *is* my nature, or what shall I allow it to become? or again, My untried nature being (as I guess) thus and thus, what life will it be best for me to aim at leading? Such questioning involves the hidden answers to so many other questions that simple folks are not much to blame for bidding the curious ones bide their time in silence.

It is possible to think over the commonest relations of life and generalize about the safest way of dealing with this or that ordinary complication, but when you come to individual appeals, I must know your circumstances and powers before knowing what you can do; and I must know the circumstances of *your* circumstances before knowing what hints they proffer for your guidance in the way of hindrance or opportunity. It is easy to say, follow your own innocent impulses, unless they come in collision with your neighbor's; the impulse may be wanting or collision probable; any way the counsel is too vague to be of use. And yet you need not blame your counsellor; the question itself is vague; perhaps (but do not dwell on this parenthesis) its vagueness marks the want of strength in those characters that cannot forbear to ask it.

Still, in dealing with external obstacles as well as with subjective difficulties, one may repeat the warning, Do not force your nature. In choosing the occupation of your life, if you are content to work in a groove traced out beforehand, do not despise yourself for such docility, and imagine that if only you were cleverer you would invent new ways of disagreeing with your neighbors. Accept your good fortune, for it is such, and remember that if you have to waste none of your strength and patience in clearing a field of action for yourself, you should have the more left for raising the standard of efficiency in meeting the demands of indispensable routine.

On the other hand, however, supposing, after a candid trial and the modest reflection that there is nothing creditable in any kind of incapacity — supposing after all that you still honestly and truly *cannot* make the best of yourself by acting upon the lines prescribed, then, in almost any case, you may and should assert your claim to strike another path. There is so little of providential adaptation between young people and their surroundings, that it is always possible the former may be right even in rejecting opportunities of a distinctly favorable kind; and besides, the offered opportunities are not by any means always favorable. Only remember this: it is easier to live the life that is expected from us, and you have no right to undertake a work

of needless difficulty, unless you are able and willing to subdue the difficulties and justify your rejection of the lighter task.

It is possible that fate has been hard, and only given you a choice between uncongenial opportunities and the encounter with obstacles beyond your strength. Should this be so, try to see the bearing of the facts so justly for yourself that you may accept which ever fate needs must, instead of having it thrust upon you in a worse form by force. It belongs to the A B C of sanity not to rail at luck. It is perfectly true that some people have just so much strength as will enable them to succeed if the chances are favorable, and to fail if luck goes against them. If you are one of these, you have my deepest sympathy, but you can only compel my respect and admiration by rising above your fate — by consenting — you are still free in this — either to sacrifice your own imagined best, in order that your part in the world may be the most effective in your reach, or to renounce the prospect of personal success for the sake of faithfulness to your inner conviction as to what success alone is supremely worth having.

But a consistent run of luck for or against the individual is rare. The majority may count upon an average lot, though all begin with desires and aspirations after something better. Supposing, as a schoolboy or an undergraduate, you feel, let us

say, like one of Bulwer Lytton's heroes, an interesting, intelligent youth confronting an interesting, perplexing, tantalizing world. Note, I beseech you, the vagueness of your own feeling, the diffused indefiniteness of your sense of power and longing. At a very early age one can understand that the world has no answer to such unconditioned appeals, and that no one has a chance of living to accomplish great things who has not patience to live long enough for his own powers to specialize and develop.

I understand the youthful intolerance of *le provisoire:* there is nothing more pitiably pathetic than a middle age spent in waiting for the chances that come of themselves to one in a thousand. But if we consider the case dispassionately, that is not the alternative. It is abnormal — not sane or natural — to wait half a lifetime for a chance of beginning to live; but it is natural, normal, and even necessary, to begin life by gathering impressions and information which can only attain their full significance later, when turned into material to feed the powers that have meanwhile been cultivated in blindfold faith. I would urge no one to be content with a life at once idle and empty, but I contend no one of us has a right to reckon on the full contentment afforded by an adequate share in the fruit of our own and others' work until our own contribution has passed the margin of average sufficiency, and left a balance

over by way of insurance against mischances. If you are always unlucky, ask yourself through what defect you fail to give the world a fair chance of doing indifferently well by you.

One of the most damaging indecisions of youth is to feel or say, "I would give all my time and pains gladly and obstinately to this art, that science, the other branch of industry, if only I could be assured that my work would reach eminence in the end; if not, I will prefer a less arduous road into obscurity." As one looks upon the hundreds of young ambitions near at hand, who can have the heart to say, "Probably none of you will attain any kind of eminence, and in a little while very few of you will care." I cannot outlive my pity for these doomed aspirations. But there must be something wrong in our whole way of looking at things if each generation is condemned to begin with illusions and end with indifference or despair. Can we not procure acceptance among old and young for the belief that the best good is not just the pre-eminence of one small head above the rest, but some amelioration of the gross result, in the attainment of which no single particle of obscure labor can be dispensed with? We may not have the choice of eminence, but obscurity is no bar against the charge of treason. I grant, foolish youth, you cannot lead in the vanguard of the grand army of progress; but know this likewise, so precious is the safety of the host, so great the prize of victory,

so calamitous the annihilation of defeat, that even you, loiterer, shall not escape the gibbet if but so much as one lean and feeble baggage mule goes lame in your charge for want of grooming.

See, my children, you are but a feeble folk if we take you one by one, but the spirit of the ages has fed your dreams, and the ambition that throbs within you is for a greater result than the great man — whom you are not — could himself effect without you. This is your inheritance, to understand how the feeble millions may join together, how the single efforts will gather into groups, and how, as first the units, then the groups learn to cease from evil, to cease from laying stumbling-blocks in each other's paths, at length there will arise a social fabric of which the glory and the good shall transcend the fairest imaginations of a solitary genius as far as the loyal service of enlightened millions will outweigh in efficacy your boyish efforts at creative independence. This, and not eminence, shall be your reward at last, to see more and more clearly how each step towards the great result was won by the co-operation of countless lives, disciplined each in action and forbearance, and all alike gloriously indispensable to the final triumph of the race. The verdict, *Sat est vixisse*, comes from those who have shared in such life as this.

. . . . . .

And it does not follow that all who have ceased

to talk of their ideal have ceased to care for it. We leave off talking when we find that it is as hard to match our thought with words as our ready words with action. The oracle in "Wilhelm Meister" says truly, "To think is easy, to act difficult, to act according to our thought troublesome." One of the best fruits of age is an appreciation of the slender shades of difference which mark off our doings from our intentions; we have a scruple in saying what we intended when we know how much our act has fallen short; and yet it may be that both act and will are better, more purely good, than in the bolder days when we boasted of aiming at nothing short of perfectness.

. . . . . .

But does the boy ask that our lives shall "come to something" in his eyes or our own? Is the test objective worth or subjective satisfaction, and shall he or I be the judge of what is "enough" of either? or is he still exercised by the same problem as Patriarchs and Psalmists before him, with the added discrepancy between recompense and merits, that the largest merits no longer carry with them at least the cheap salve of self-complacency? Does he want to know whether it is enough to live righteously without flourishing like a green bay tree in consequence, or has he a formed opinion that it isn't, and

that therefore the righteous must either flourish or let him know the reason why? Does he . . .

. . . . . .

What he actually does at this point is to interrupt my disconnected jottings and summon me to join the Granny and Hester at tea in the upper chamber of the tower. It is one of the unwritten laws of the island that the visitors do not break up into smaller knots than four for excursions, luncheons, afternoon tea, &c., unless sweethearts or invalids receive a special dispensation, and I obeyed willingly enough, not observing that Johnny had meanwhile possessed himself of the loose sheets on which I had been writing. He produced them after tea, saying, "In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom," and insisted on reading my platitudes to the ladies as the day grew pale.

When he came to the last paragraph he said, "Of course, this isn't finished, but if dear old Philo is left to himself, he will wander off into moral reflections that may be worthy of the seven sages, but that don't tell me exactly what I want to know."

I asked, "What is it that you want to know?"

"That is exactly what I want you to tell me," he observed, and Hester smiled, as if the remark was more than usually to the point. She is five and twenty, rather handsome, rather clever and rather sarcastic, one of the girls usually spoken of

by lady friends with some "wonder that she doesn't marry." She says that she will do so when any one as nice as Mrs. Charles A—— (otherwise known as the Granny) asks her. This lady is twelve or fifteen years older than Hester; she was left a widow young, and undertook the charge of an elder brother's daughter after his wife's death. This niece also married young, and the climax was put to a long series of family bereavements by the death of husband and wife, drowned on the passage out to India. One little girl of theirs was left behind in England. Mrs. Charles A—— adopted her orphan grandniece, but insisted on marking the interval between the two generations by teaching the child (who was by this time about ten) to call her Granny instead of Aunt. Silver hairs and some of the serenity of beautiful old age joined with the name to make young and old accept the little fiction which warranted her grand-maternal airs.

There was a pause as I did not respond to Johnny's ingenious appeal, broken presently by Hester. "Johnny is rather rude, Cousin Philip; but I think girls, at all events, want to be told"—and then she stopped; and the Granny said, "Both boys and women have a notion, which they are too shy to express, that life isn't all learning and doing. Its happiness depends on our pleasures and what we call our 'feelings,' and this is the terra incognita of which they think a guide, philosopher and friend

should give them news before they embark towards it."

I said, "If talk about what people ought to do is wearisome, what words will you find to describe the frigid dreariness of talk about what people ought to feel? Besides, most people admit that they don't do all they ought, but who is willing to admit that his own natural feelings can be in the wrong?"

"At least," said Hester, "it doesn't make much difference whether one ought to have felt this and that or no, so long as one *has* felt or feels it still. We can't help ourselves; perhaps we oughtn't to have eaten ginger; but if we have, what is the sense of saying we oughtn't to feel it hot in the mouth, or of telling us to try and believe we don't?"

"The right and wrong of feelings," I replied, "if there is such a thing, must answer to health and disease in tastes. One's moral stomach, for example, must be out of order if the sweets of natural affection have an acrid taste. Sometimes the desires which it is natural and wholesome to indulge may not be gratified, but the world, not we, is to blame for that. It is a suicidal kind of adaptation which would try to strangle such desires because they lay us open to fresh risks of disappointment. We shall not mend the world by trying, chameleon-wise, to take the color of its blemishes. Whatever our desires may be, now and again they will suffer dis-

appointment; but those who have the courage to endure the still-recurring disappointments without hardening in resistance will not always desire in vain."

"That," said Hester, "is just what we were asking. Looking dispassionately at the experience of most other people — (why should we expect to be wiser than they?) — what do the results of their lives enable us to predict about our own?"

"It is as a generalization from experience that I offer you the opinion that generalities will give you little help. Every passage of individual experience is *sui similis*, and the theoretical solution of a difficulty is seldom of much practical avail, even when we know it. While the feelings are entangled in the act of forming effective premisses, what satisfaction can be derived from guessing at the ultimate result, which most probably will follow after the intervention of other factors as yet unfelt? People are seldom left to reason themselves out of a difficulty with unchanged feelings."

"But," said the Granny, by way of guidance, "do their feelings change in the direction needed for their satisfaction? Do people as a rule get what they want, late if not soon? Do they, at least, as the Spanish proverb advises, and Johnny reluctantly suspects, do they end by wanting what they can get, since they cannot get what they wanted?"

The Master had joined us unobserved, and he

answered, "Life modifies their wants more than their gettings; but you young people can't be expected to understand beforehand how tastes give way to habit as the years go on. There is no end to a boy's difficulties because misfortunes and discontents that are confronted *a priori* leave no motives behind them. Real adventures, whether they turn out well or ill, leave a legacy of incentives both to action and forbearance; and in the long-run men more often suffer from the presence of inducements to do wrong than from the absence of inducements to do right, or to do anything at all."

"And this being so?" said the Granny.

The Master and she have a way of continuing each other's sentences, and he continued, "This being so, it is not unreasonable for the question to state itself *a priori* in youth: What clue should a man grasp beforehand to serve as a guide when overmastering passion threatens to sweep him off the beaten track?"

"What, indeed?" said Johnny, who adopts a fresh creed every vacation and for the moment calls himself an agnostic.

"Does it seem a trifling answer to say that in hours of passionate trial or temptation a man can have no better help than his own past? Every generous feeling that has not been crushed, every wholesome impulse that has been followed, every just perception, every habit of unselfish action,

will be present in the background to guide or to restrain. It is too late, when the storm has burst, to provide our craft with rigging fit to weather it; but we may find a purpose for the years that oppress us by their dull calm if we elect to spend them in laying up stores of strength and wisdom and emotional prejudices of a goodly human kind, whereby, if need arises, we may be able to resist hereafter the gusts of passion that might else bear us out of the straightforward chosen course."

"Let an old woman have her turn at preaching," said the Granny, with the discriminating smile that often heralds a bit of casuistic subtlety. "In looking forward for one's self it may be well to say, 'It will be my own fault, the outcome of my ill-spent days, if my strength fails me in a time of trial;' but we all *do* fail again and again in our least endeavors, and none of us, therefore, can sit in judgment on another. Who can say but what we should have failed yet more utterly under the same temptation? The one favor we have a right to show ourselves, the one concession we need not grudge to the ineradicable instinct of self-esteem, is to view our own failures with the largest measure of intolerance. Other people fail, no doubt — it is likely enough they should — but how come we of all men thus to disappoint our own reasonable expectations of something better than common failure from the cherished self?"

"One topic of consolation may emerge," I said, "from the midst of failure. It is a form of good fortune not to have been the vehicle of evil, and as one's experience of the number of possible calamities increases, one's appreciation of the felicity involved in escaping them increases too. Some people count among their mercies the crimes they have not been tempted to commit."

She continued: "I know it is a doubtful consolation to say, either of a real trouble or of one's own wickedness, only that 'it might have been worse.' As a plea for contentment, this argument is about on a par with the other favorite suggestion, 'It is a hard case, but that of somebody else is harder.' That some one else is worse off than I am can hardly be an alleviation of my trouble — an aggravation rather. It is Mephistopheles who sneers the consolation, 'Sie ist die Erste nicht.'"

"But there are two parts in our indignation against what is wrong in the world," said the Master, "and they have a different origin. There is the spontaneous revolt of our feeling and the deliberate disapproval of our judgment. As a philosopher, I have no more reason to denounce the order of creation because I happen to be one of its victims than because Nokes or Styles are victims. As a man, my denunciations of the wrongs of Nokes or Styles usually borrow half their fervor from the resemblance between their wrongs and mine, and

half the remainder from my imagination of their wrongs as so nearly within the range of possible contingencies for myself as to stir the sympathetic wrath which is the earliest phase of fellow-feeling. But supposing, as is the case with most young people, I have little personal knowledge of my fellow-sufferers, and an absorbing sense of the wrong or hardship of my own lot, ought I to find any motive for fortitude and patience in the abstract certainty that I have fellow-sufferers I do not know?"

"I don't," observed Johnny; and we smiled parenthetically at the notion of the cheerfully argumentative youth being claimed as the fellow of any sufferer.

"Still, if it were not indiscreet," — and Hester leant back in her chair with wondering, interrogative glances.

"Well?" said the Master as she paused.

She laughed, and tried more than once before arriving at her question.

"I should like to know, supposing you *do* get the thing of things you wished for, the very best pleasure of one's dreams, or rather —

> A pleasure as much better than one's dreams
> As happiness than any longing seems —

What comes after that? If I am walking about in and out of doors all day, I feel neither cold nor

heat; but if I've been for a sharp walk in the frost or sitting over a snug fire, I am very critical of the temperature of the room one goes into next."

A "Well bowled!" from Johnny was the only immediate response.

I feared lest the accidental silence might give the question the effect, or rather the appearance, of indiscretion, and stumbled to the rescue with a story. Hester should have the verdict of a better authority than any one present. I named a great poet, who was popular and successful besides; he was not supposed to have passed an entirely tranquil youth, but he was happily married long ago, and has never ceased to be in love with his wife. He was prevailed upon by an undergraduate son to assist at a college "wine;" the young fellows were excited over the honor done them, and talked fast and furiously, each one wishing to have the poet's verdict on the wildest of his pet beliefs. At last we got to the originals of Goethe's "West-östlicher Divan," and thence to the extravagances of passion and the superstitious reaction of belief in Nemesis and the "Ring of Polykrates."

The poet said there was wisdom in all superstition, and most of all in this. He rose from his chair, towering like a giant in the low room, and said: "If any of you live to be as happy as I hope you may, you will know what it is to feel that you must ransom your treasure of delight, or cold fate will

sweep it from your arms. It is a strange feeling: one does not dream of *earning* one's good luck — that is sweet beyond the imagination of desert — but one has an impulse to atone, to pay back, it matters not to whom, something of the undeserved treasures of delight which have fallen to our lot from heaven. Not being a moral philosopher, only a poor poet," he went on, "I am not obliged to find a logical reason why I should cherish this superstition, but a scientific friend offered me gratis an explanation that will pass muster if you want one.

"However fortunate we may be, the supreme ecstasy of fruition cannot last at its intensest point for ever: when the climax is reached, we must either stop short or risk descent; and there are moments after which even common happiness seems a cruel falling short. We cannot prolong the ecstasy; we cannot bear to feel ourselves falling short of what has been. There is but one way to propitiate Nemesis and avoid the judgment of the gods — to make ourselves their executioner, and not tempt them with prayers for the mortal draught of unending joy. You were speaking of the Persian poet's intoxication: whether he is drunk with wine, or love, or piety, makes little odds; my worship of Nemesis is but a practical expression of Byron's bugbear, 'Sermons and soda-water the day after.' Drink your deepest, drink till you have drained creation's sweetest goblet dry, then do not hold it

out to be filled again from heaven, but take off your coat and go out to plough; work, endure, open your eyes to the unendurable suffering and the unrewarded labor at your very door, and only when you have paid your tribute to the jealous goddesses whose snares are set for presumptuous feet, only then dare to desire, if it may be, the renewal of your bliss. So, and only so, can one who has it in him to be ravenous escape the curse of greed, which is to enjoy the less the more there is given it to enjoy.

"One grows thirsty preaching:"—the poet held out a goblet of heroic proportions, and the Amphitryon of the evening drew the cork of his last bottle of champagne. The poet raised the glass with an inch of foam upon the surface and drank — drank all the foam and three quarters of the wine — to Temperance and Nemesis. "A perfect draught," he said with a sigh, and added meditatively, "but a mouthful more or less would have been a mistake."

He balanced the glass with an absent air between his fingers, till they clenched upon it and snapped the slender stem, letting the bowl fall and the wine spill where it would. All whose glasses were not empty followed his example (though some, I fancy, cut their fingers), shouting, "A libation to Nemesis!"

Amphitryon's papa thought the bill for broken

glass and wine-stained carpets immoderate, but was propitiated by the gift of a Venetian goblet, with a silver sheath holding the two parts of a snapped stem together. On the sheath was engraved, "To Nemesis and Sophrosyne."

After a whispered consultation with her schoolboy ally, Hester observed that the ancient Greeks had made a mistake about the gender of the latter noun.

The Master remonstrated: "Hester wishes to keep us to her point, but I will not be allured from mine. If it is well to indulge moderately in the taste of supreme felicity, *à fortiori* it must be foolish to fill our pipe with the consciousness of woe and smoke that sour opium to excess. Besides, unless we carry off this pipe of dispeace into a desert, we find always so much of good and bad still in the world outside our woes, that we end by feeling it to be reasonable to give them less than all our thoughts. It is while we have no feelings but our own to think about that we think our feelings afford a rational base for conclusions about the nature and worth of life."

"Propositions of this kind," I said, "may be *understood* as soon as the reasoning powers are awake, but only exceptional natures are born with the temper that leads some persons in each generation to find out their truth afresh, and to turn the insignificant phrases into a fact of living and fruitful experience."

"There are some truths, I grant," said the Master, "that it seems almost impossible to convey in words except to those who know them already, and yet it is worth while to make the attempt. The statement that passes half-understood from the unready mind may yet serve as a finger-post pointing towards the after experience which is the more easily understood because of the premature explanation of it that was not understood at all. We cannot help our juniors to know, of their own knowledge, what the lapse of time will show to them as it has to us, but we may prevail on them so far as to rank the fulfilment of our prophecies among the category of possibilities, which of itself is a step, sometimes the first and costliest, towards understanding and belief.

"And the dull chorus of graybeards all agree in prophesying your life will be what you yourself choose and will to make it — *subject to the real conditions*. Subject to the conditions in which you find yourself, and can only modify within limits, there is no limit to your power of living the best possible life — there is no limit but your own foolish choice and feeble will; and if you have wit and strength to see the folly and foolishness behind you, there need be no limit to your hope and purpose of escaping even yet from their dominion. Make to yourself friends of all the powers of righteousness, and study as a science or an art the art of scientifi-

cally circumventing your own base propensities. The largest ambitions are a safeguard against *ennui*, and the least good habit against sudden failures."

Hester said, coloring slightly as she ended: "Is there any ambition without arrogance? Too arrogant good intentions are apt to form no other habits save that of falling short of them."

The Granny received the observation with a smile of recognition, and added that St. Theresa took a vow of perfectness from which she had to be absolved because her director had not time to tell her always (perhaps he did not know) which of two courses her vow prescribed.

"It was hard upon the saint," our friend continued, "and it is hard upon us sinners to know too much of human nature to dare to wish to inherit her ambition; but I think there is this reward in store for modest and feasible good-behavior — to wit, a growing sense of the attractiveness of the saint's ideal. Surely, in these days of world-weariness, no revelation can be more welcome than that of a goal which attracts the more the longer we pursue, which appears in all its divine beauty the more plainly to our eyes as they learn to measure the impassable and infinite abyss across which its radiance shines as we worship afar off. The best possible life, of which we spoke, is the one that enjoys most largely the beatific vision of an ever-impossible Better.

"Many have asked, 'Is there a good on earth to live for?' but no one ever questioned whether the best good of earth was good, if so be it might be had. Earth's happiest best is realized, as the happiest among us know, in the 'eternal marriage of love and duty,' when the love of one and the service of many go hand in hand — when choice and obligation point one way, and the whole soul exults in glad obedience to their joint sweet urging — when the devotion of heart and will is such as to make even the answer of love and praise sound far away, faint and sweet, like the memory of over-paid desert. Such a moment translated beyond the grave inspires the Christian text, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' I do not think it is given us to imagine any brighter crown of life than this, or indeed any other crown for the whole of life. Love alone, victory or fame — each counts for much, but which alone can so fulfil the widespread cravings of the human heart as not to leave one aching blank, with power in its season to poison all the rest that is enjoyed?

"That is the best; and for the man who has done nothing worse than fail innocently — and the worst luck forces on us no worse fate than this — who has failed to do great deeds, and win a greater love (and for each one the love and deeds are great which are great enough to content his own desire), for such

there is nothing worse in store than this, to know that there are others in the world better off than he. There is one thing I should have liked to see before I died. I sometimes wished to try and hasten the good day, but I was not the chosen prophet; yet let it be remembered of me, when he comes and others see it, that I said the day of his coming was near. I speak of a day when all my understanding friends will dare to join together in uttering, one with another, one to another, their deepest feelings and beliefs concerning man's life, the place of our life in the infinite universe, and the answer of the human soul to the omnipotent urgency of the infinite: and when once more deep faith will dare to trust itself to act.

"I write my own epitaph, *Sat est vixisse*, without mourning because I shall not see that day, because I see so clearly that it must come — a day when my friends' jarring paradoxes and the demands of incompatible prejudices shall crystallize into a broader, more luminous, more stirring whole, acceptable alike to all the many, growing day by day more, to whom human life is sacred, and who are willing to accept for their own life the rule, which is also a religion, of tender reverence for human sorrow, glad sympathy with human joy, and, as the source which feeds all wholesome natural life with its choicest treasures of emotion, the stress of active

energy, the steady exercise of every power of mind and will to order and create.

"We have to make the world in which we live and act, in which our fellows have to find the objects of their love, in which their love may join with ours in the joyous passion of unwounded sympathy. In so far as I have taken part in the work and shared the feelings of those who strive creatively after a better order, in so far as my mind has rested, filled and satisfied with the vision of its not impossible avatar, in so far I am prepared to fall asleep with the grateful sigh that ends a day of pleasant labor, with the absolute content that is as free from desire as from regret. I have lived! *Sat est vixisse.*

"Life's duties leave us content to live, its pains and pleasures content not to live for ever."

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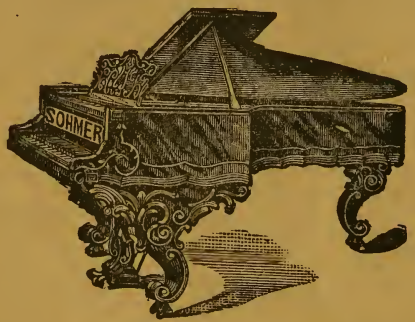

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